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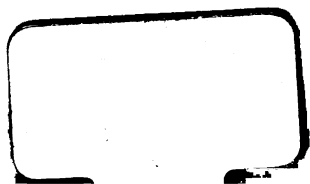


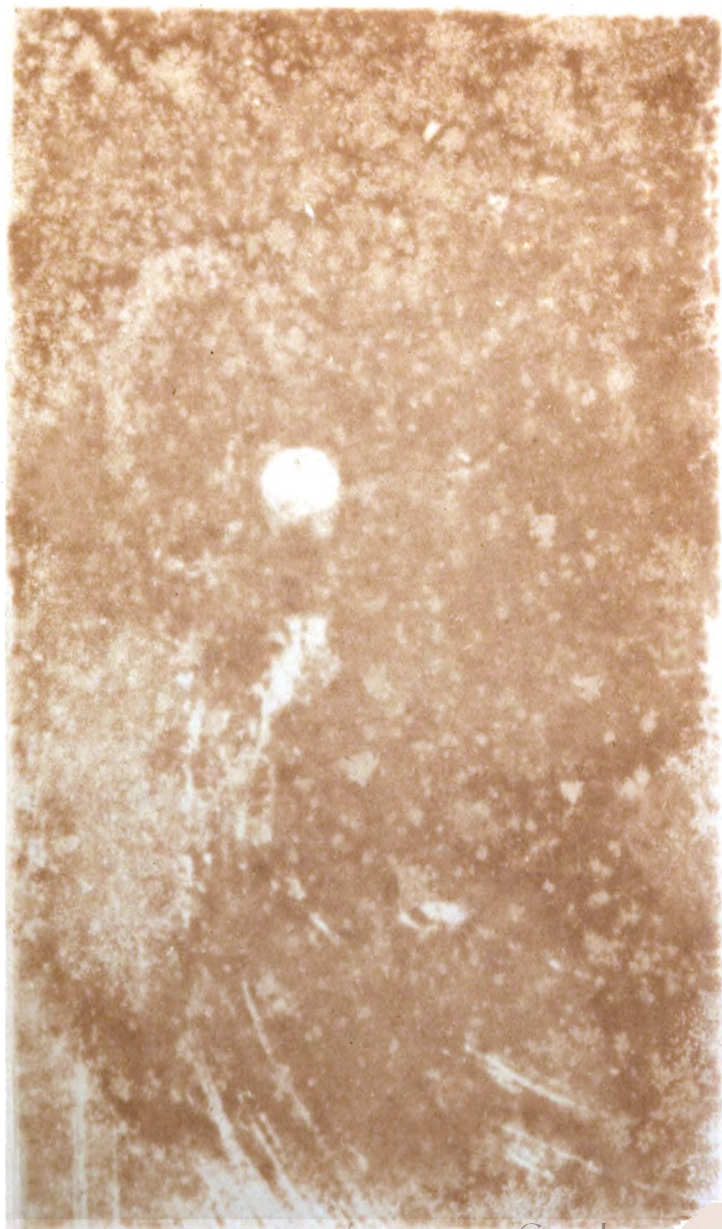
*The young Cumbrian, and other  
stories of schoolboys*

George Etell Sargent, Religious Tract Society (Great Britain)

W.L.J.

WNVIC.1











THE DONKEYS WERE CAUGHT AND MOUNTED.

[See page 92.]



# THE YOUNG CUMBRIAN,

And other Stories of Schoolboys.

BY

GEORGE E. SARGENT,

AUTHOR OF

*"The Story of a Pocket Bible," "The City Arab," "Boys will be Boys,"*  
*"Stories of Old England," etc.*

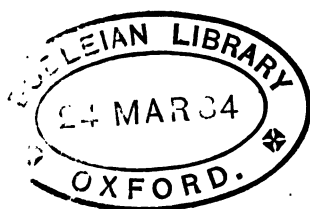


THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

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I.

## THE YOUNG CUMBRIAN;

OR,

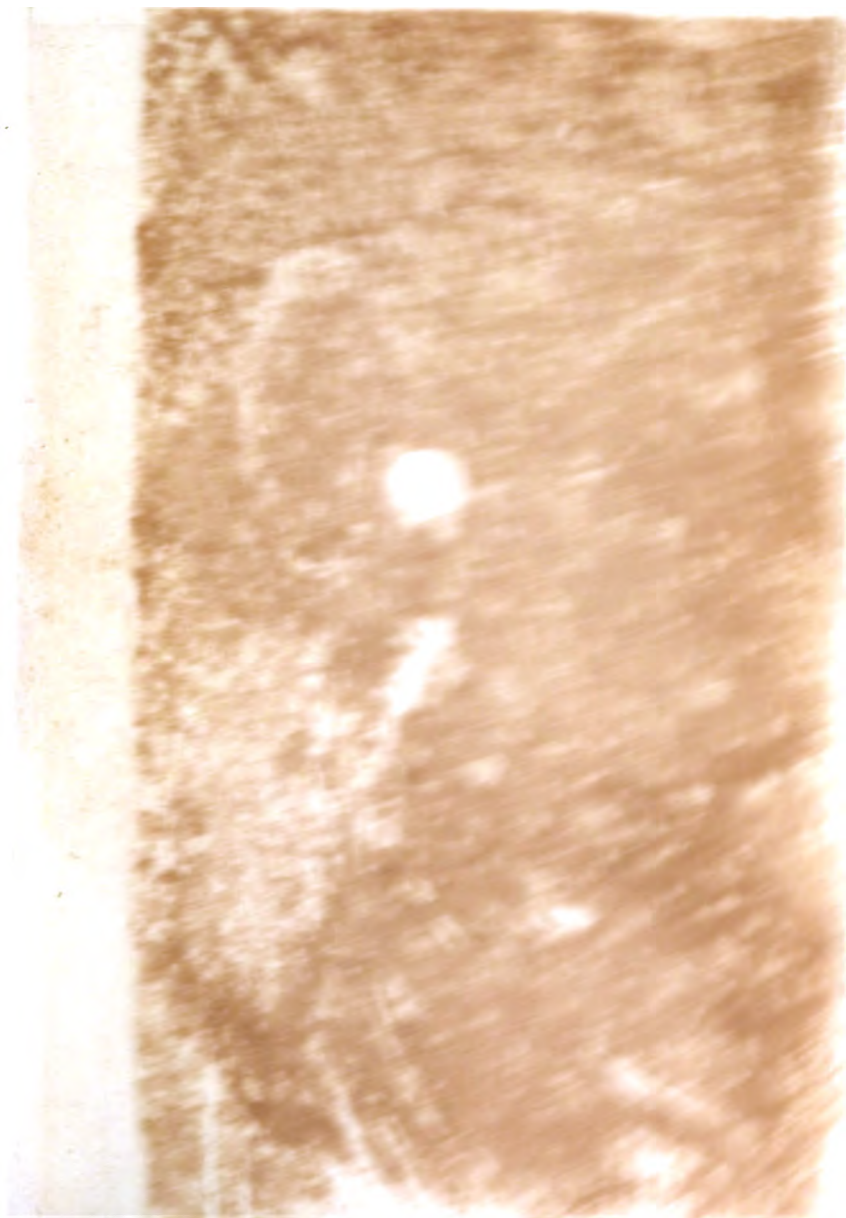
HOW TO FORGIVE.

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**O**F all schoolboys whom we ever knew, poor little Tom Smith was as unlikely as any to become the hero of a story. His name, his look, his manners, all might seem to forbid the thought. Ah! but there are many brave, noble, kind, and generous hearts under the plainest forms and commonest names; and Tom Smith, *our* Tom Smith, was one of them.

He was about eight years old when he made his first appearance at school, and his countenance, at first sight, was far from interesting. He was thin, pale, and stooping, so as to look almost deformed; and all his movements were awkward. When he spoke, he excited the laughter of his schoolfellows—that is to say, of many of them; some had better manners than to laugh outright, though *they* were amused. His birthplace was in one of the northern counties, and he brought with him to school the peculiar dialect of home. Those who laughed did not remember that, had the case been reversed, and had they been sent to Northumberland, or





Cumberland, or Durham, their southern speech would there have sounded oddly and strangely.

Then, poor little Tom—for by that somewhat vulgar diminutive was he always called—was a perfect ignoramus. He had never been to school, and could scarcely spell out a sentence composed of words of two syllables; in the use of pen or pencil he was as inexperienced and inexpert as an infant. Worse than this, it was soon found that, at that time, he had no great love for learning. He seemed dull of comprehension, and hated tasks as strongly as he could hate anything. The confinement of school was, at first, dreadful to him. He was restless as a wild bird newly caught and caged, and fretted sorely over the necessary constraint he had to endure. Ah! few school books were ever more blotted and blurred with bitter tears than poor little Tom Smith's.

And in play hours it was much the same. The ample playground seemed to be too straitened for our young Cumbrian; for, still like the unhappy caged wild bird, which beats its breast madly against the imprisoning wires, so did the poor boy, day after day, walk round and round, close to the high palings and hedges which shut him in, wishing with all his heart—who can doubt it?—that he had wings like the dove, that he might fly away and be at rest.

Weeks passed away from the time of his first introduction to school life, and still the little Cumbrian was solitary and sad. No one seemed to care for him, except the master, who took kindly notice of him, and strove by gentle encouragements to reconcile him to his new life. But the poor boy shrank from notice, and preferred communion with his own lonely and melancholy thoughts.

Tom was an orphan. His father had died about three years before that in which we first knew him ; his mother scarcely more than as many months. No wonder he was sad. Before his father's death, the child had been healthy and joyous ; but afterwards, he had drooped and pined like a tender plant deprived of its nutriment. None could tell what ailed him ; but all foretold that he would not live long on earth ; that his mother would be left alone, for she had no other child. And the mother, believing and fearing this, had petted the weak boy, and permitted him to roam at will over the beautiful hills of his native county, untrammelled by tasks and books, and had waited on him with such love as only dwells in a mother's breast.

The young Cumbrian loved nature ; and nature was the book which he had studied under his mother's eye. He had studied it well too. He knew much about the birds of the air, their "wood notes wild," their names, their natures, and their nests ; of the summer insects too, and the flowers of the field, and the hill side, and the valley. His mother had been his teacher, as together they daily roamed in search of health and strength—while she had health and strength to roam—over the wild but beautiful country around their pretty cottage. Happily for the little orphan and for herself, she could teach other things than these. She was a Christian ; and she knew that, beautiful as is nature, and much as it tells of God's power and goodness to create and preserve, and to bless with daily mercies, it is the Gospel alone which tells of His power to save—to save sinners. From her lips, therefore, had the boy heard the Gospel, the good news of a Saviour ; and God had blessed her teaching and her prayers. Afterwards,



months after we first knew him, the great incentive to learning, with him, was that he might be able to read and diligently study those blessed truths of which, young as he was, he was never ashamed, and which had first entered his heart from the lips of his mother.

But the oracles who foreboded the boy's early removal from earth were mistaken. The mother was taken; the child—weakly still, but gaining strength—was left. Ah! it is a woful stroke, this, to a fond and loving boy, the death of a fond and loving mother. Surely few things on earth can equal it. But cheer up, orphan child; there is One who is the orphan's Friend. Trust in Him, and you shall know what these words mean, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Yes, you shall know it: never fear.

Boys, merry-hearted boys, who know not what bereavement means, we intreat you never treat an *orphan* schoolboy unkindly. Think of your own parents as *dead*, and surely you will not have the heart to do it. Think of the great and glorious Jehovah as the "Father of the fatherless," the Parent of the parentless, and surely you will not have the courage to do it.

Yes, it was a mournful stroke to the little Cumbrian: his father gone, his mother gone, strangers, only strangers around him. Then came his uncle, his mother's brother, and spoke comforting words to him, and bore him away far southward; and then, after a few weeks, Tom Smith was sent to school. He would be rich, he was told, when he should have grown up to be a man, and he must receive a fitting education; but these words had failed to convey joy to his heart, or animation to his mind.

Time heals many sorrows; but some sorrows take a long time in healing. It was thus with the young Cumbrian; for, too weakly, too unapt, and too shy and shrinking to take part in the boisterous sports of his schoolfellows, and too young perhaps, at any rate too ignorant, to join in their more intellectual recreations, he might have settled down into melancholy mopishness. But his love of nature rescued him from this danger.

In one of the pleasant country rambles which used to vary the monotony of school and playground, little Tom—his countenance lighted up and brightened with ecstasy—sprang forward, uttered a cry of delight, and commenced digging vigorously at the root of a small wild flower which his languid eye had spied in the meadow through which the schoolboys were passing. It was an uncommon flower where found, but common on the hills of Cumberland; and to the boy it seemed like the return of a long-absent friend. He carefully removed it and conveyed it home, procured a pot, and planted it, and thenceforward, day after day, he visited his new-found treasure, watered and nourished it, and was no longer lonely.

It was not long after this, as the young Cumbrian, retired to a corner of the playground—*his* corner—was tending, with affectionate care, his own dear flower, and rejoicing in the fresh, healthy young buds it was putting forth, that his monitor—one of the six dignified *gownsmen*, who had been just advanced to the oversight of the lowest desk—came forward in all the full-blown importance of his new office:

“Oh, here you are, you young dunce! I thought I should find you here with your stupid weed. Do you remember what I told you yesterday?”

"About the multiplication table?" asked the little fellow, timidly.

"Yes, about the multiplication table," responded the young official, mimicking (as we need not mimic here)



THE YOUNG CUMBRIAN AND HIS FLOWER.

the dialect and exaggerating the tones of the shrinking boy; "that's just it. Come, do you know it now?"

"I don't know; I am not sure," replied the orphan, with a tear in his eye, and trembling at the bullying

manner of his big schoolfellow. I am afraid I am not perfect in it yet; it is very difficult."

"Nonsense!—difficult? that won't do. *I* never found it difficult, and I knew it long before I was as old as you are. But difficult or not, you know, I told you to learn it off-hand, and say it to me to-day, if you did not want to catch you know what: I am not going to have dunces at *my* desk, I can tell you."

"New brooms sweep clean, they say, Bowler," sarcastically observed a boy who just then was passing.

"Mind your own business, will you, Mansfield?" replied the new monitor, turning angrily to the intruder; and then again addressing himself to the little Cumbrian—"I shan't let you off; Mr. Weston told me I was to get you on, and drill the table into you; for it was a month ago, or more, that you began to learn it. You know *that*, don't you?"

Poor little Smith made no reply; but, still seated on the ground, he hugged his treasure, and looked up imploringly into the face of his monitor. He could read no pity there; and, looking downwards, a big tear-drop or two fell upon the flower.

"Oh! blubbering, are you? you little milksop. Come, none of that; now, put down that stupid bit of earthenware, and let us hear what you know. Now then, do you mind? put it down, I say, directly."

The frightened boy did as he was ordered.

"Now mind," said the young tyrant; "if you don't answer every question, I shall just make an end of that flower you make such a fuss about; do you hear?" And, saying this, he snatched up the flower-pot, and held it in his left hand.

"Oh, no, no, no; pray, pray, Mr. Bowler," cried the

poor child beseechingly, and springing to his feet, "don't, please don't. I will do anything you tell me, if I can; and I will learn the table directly; but don't kill my poor flower. Oh, you don't know how I love it!"

"Oh, love it, do you? Well, I don't care for that; and you need not think to come over me by calling me *mister*. I am no mister yet, but plain Jack; and I shall do just what I said; so here goes."

Mansfield was standing a little way off; and the unhappy young Cumbrian turned his eyes towards him, as much as to say, "Will you not take my part?" But the imploring look was unseen, or unnoticed, and again the boy stood despairingly before his tormentor: he was convinced that he would not be able to answer the questions put to him: he had been for days and weeks labouring at the multiplication table, but in vain; and the more he had striven, the more confused had he become.

"Here goes!" shouted Bowler, again grasping the flower roughly with his right hand: "Twelve times seven, how many?"

"Seventy-two," gasped the poor boy, after a short pause, and almost unconscious of what he said.

The next moment the broken flower-pot, and the mould it had contained, were strewn at his feet, and the tyrant was tearing to pieces the flower, root and branch. "There, and there, and there!" he shouted exultingly. "I told you I would do it. Twelve times seven is seventy-two, is it? Ha, ha!"

Poor Tom uttered one sorrowful moan as he looked at the scattered fragments of his pet plant. "My mother, my dear, dear mother!" he sobbed, and turned away.

"Bowler, I say Bowler, what have you been doing

to the boy?" exclaimed Mansfield, angrily, his attention at length roused by the loud tones of the one, and the broken sob of the other: "what have you been doing, I say?"

"What is that to you?" responded the tyrant; "what business have you to interfere?"

"It is something to me; and I won't stand by and see a little fellow misused, whoever he may be. What has he done to you, Tom? Did he strike you?"

"Oh no," sobbed the boy. He could say no more, but pointed to the broken pot and ruined flower.

"Oh, is that all? Never mind; I'll get you another flower—pot and all—and let me see if he dare touch that. What is it all about? Come now, tell me."

"Just you tell me one thing," shouted Bowler, reddening with rage: "Are you monitor of the sixth desk, or am I?"

"You are; and I am monitor of the third," replied Mansfield. "Well, what then?"

"Then you have no business to come between me and my boys; and you shan't either."

"Gently, Mr. Monitor of the sixth," replied Mansfield, coolly. "If I see you ill treating any boy—yours, mine, or anybody else's—I shall interfere. And more than that, you know who else would interfere if I were to choose to tell that you have been domineering. So you had better be quiet."

For some reason or other, Bowler thought so too, and taking the advice, walked away in a silent rage, only muttering to himself that he would have it out of Tom Smith yet, when there should be no one to take his part.

"Now tell me all about it, Tom," said his self-constituted protector, kindly.

It was the first time Mansfield had taken any notice of the little fellow, and the kind tone unlocked Tom's heart, and he told his new friend some of his troubles.

"Well now, cheer up, Tom; I will teach you this dreadful multiplication table, and we will look after another flower for you next time we go out. Come along;" and Mansfield led his protégé to one of the rustic seats in the playground. "Come, don't be daunted. I was, though, when I had to learn that table first; but my sister put me up to a good way of remembering nine times and twelve times—they puzzled me most; and I then soon got over it."

Mansfield was as good as his word, and better. He had a grateful scholar, and soon the formidable table was overcome, and many things besides, which, to the dispirited young Cumbrian, had till now seemed almost insurmountable. Another flower was found, too, and many other flowers; and Mansfield learned from his little friend many pleasant things about them which he had never dreamt of before. The whole school wondered at this friendship, for Mansfield was one of the oldest and cleverest of their number; but he let them wonder on.

But Tom Smith was at the sixth desk, and Bowler was monitor of the sixth, and Bowler had become Tom's enemy from the day in which Mansfield had become Tom's friend. And many a cruelly tyrannical way he had of making his enmity felt without openly showing it. Ah! how quick were his eyes to see a misshapen letter, a misspelt word, a mistaken figure in the little orphan boy's copy, exercise, or sum; and how ready was his hand to put down a bad mark for

these misdeeds! How sharp were his ears to catch a premature whisper, before it had half escaped the young Cumbrian's lips! "Another bad mark for that." How keenly did the monitor of the sixth peer into little Tom Smith's desk at nine o'clock in the morning; and woe to poor Tom if a book had been carelessly thrown in out of true square. "Another bad mark for an untidy desk." Or if a pen or pencil below the requisite number were found deficient—"a bad mark for that also." Or if, two minutes after the school bell had rung, and when the roll was called over, it ever happened that Tom were just entering the schoolroom door when his name was pronounced, who was ready with a loud "*Abest*" by way of response? Why, Bowler, the monitor of the sixth desk. "Another bad mark for that, Master Thomas."

"It is a shame of you to spite that boy so," said one, and another, and another, when these things happened; for in time, by some means or other, especially by the generous countenance of Mansfield, the little orphan had become a favourite—so gentle and loving and trusting he had proved himself.

"What do you mean by shame?" exclaimed the monitor of the sixth desk, angrily and scornfully: "I have not gone beyond my authority, have I?"

No, Bowler, no; these things were all "according to law"—the *letter* of the law, mind you; but you sadly stopped short of the spirit of that other law, which might have been observed, and the first not disregarded—

"The new, best law of LOVE."

Two years passed away, and the young Cumbrian

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had made rapid advances—ay, even towards the dignity of the monitor's robe. He was no longer dull of comprehension ; though gentle in temper as ever he had been, even to timidity, he had become ardent in the pursuit of knowledge. Many of the boys whom he had seen at his first entering school had left to return no more. Among them was his friend and protector Mansfield : \* many, however, remained, and among these was Bowler, still, in spite of vacancies above him, the monitor of the sixth desk. He seemed a fixture there, for, one after another, younger boys had stepped over his head, and our Tom Smith was pressing closely at his heels.

All the boys loved Smith—all but Bowler, whose old feelings of tyrannical contempt for the little dunce who did not know his multiplication table, were deepened into jealous aversion to the clever lad who, though three years younger than himself, and shorter by nearly a head, was constantly taking him down in class, and bade fair, in the way of frank and honourable emulation, to trip him up entirely. Not that our gentle, little—still little—Tom Smith had any wish to do this ; but that it followed, as a matter of course, for the industrious, persevering, and active-minded to overtake the laggard. It is so everywhere, and it must therefore be so at school.

We once read a beautiful description of another schoolboy, written by a gentleman then known in his writings by the name of Christopher North. We thought of the young Cumbrian when we read it—it so agreed with our remembrance of him ; and here it is :—

\* We shall have more to say of Mansfield, in the following chapters, and of Bowler too.

“ At the head of every class he, of course, was found—but no ambition had he to be there ; and like a bee that works among many thousand others on the clover lea, heedless of their murmurs, and intent wholly on its own fragrant toil, did he go from task to task—although that was no fitting name for the studious creature’s meditations on all he read or wrought—no more a task for him to grow in knowledge and in thought than for a lily of the field to lift up its head towards the sun.

“ That child’s religion was like all the other parts of his character—as prone to tears as that of other children, when they read of the Divine Friend dying for them on the cross : but it was profounder far than theirs, when it shed no tears, and only made the paleness of his countenance more like that which we imagine to be the paleness of a phantom.

“ No one ever saw him angry, complaining, or displeased ; for angelical indeed was his temper, purified, like gold in fire, by suffering. He shunned not the company of other children, but loved all, as by them all he was more than beloved. In few of their plays could he take an active share ; but sitting a little way off, still attached to the merry brotherhood, though in their society he had no part to enact, he read his book on the knoll, or, happy dreamer ! sank away among the visions of his own thoughts.”

Such was “ Wee Willie ;” and such also was our little Tom Smith after his mind had become thoroughly aroused and quickened into energy by his new-born love of learning. Such, in loveliness of character, had he ever been.

It was the first of May ; this was one thing : it was *gain-turn* day ; that was another. Does this term need explanation ? On the first of every month, then, the lease of every desk was out, and each boy was open for advancement to a higher station, or liable to be degraded to a lower, as his number stood in the general casting up of the month's class books. These days were days of excitement to all, of pride and pleasure to some, and of disappointment, shame, and grief to others. By the events of these days were the diligent stimulated to greater diligence to keep steady their standing, and still to rise ; while the dilatory were stirred up to exertion to regain the ground they had lost. Whether the moral effect of this constant incentive—this perpetual emulation—was equal to its educational value, or whether the evil passions of envy and malice were excited so as to counterbalance that value, need not be discussed here.

Hurrah ! well done, little Tom ! Who would have thought it two years ago ? Actually and absolutely has he, our young Cumbrian, again made progress, one, two, three steps in advance ; he is now the sixth boy in the school, and from this day is he *the monitor of the sixth desk*. "*Palmarum qui meruit ferat* ;" the palm to him who deserves it. Take up your badge of office, Tom—your robe of dignity. On with it ; and if too long, it shall have a tuck run round the bottom.

Tom Smith the monitor of the sixth desk ! But where was his old tyrant, and more recently his ungenerous rival, Bowler ? Alas for the uncertainty of mortal honours ! he had lost his gown and his office—degraded to a mere *boy*, after being two years a *monitor*.

"It is a mistake; I am sure it is," exclaimed poor Bowler, greatly agitated—trembling, indeed, with vexation and anger, as he heard his doom from the lips of the teacher, who was calling over the names on the morning of this gain-turn day.

"Yes, sir," said the young Cumbrian, timidly, and blushing deep red, "I think there must be a mistake; I think the numbers must have been added up wrong, sir."

"You shall both of you have the books to examine for yourselves after I have called over all the names," said the teacher; "but I believe you will find that we are right."

But still Bowler kept doggedly seated at his monitorial desk; and Tom lingered at his old one.

"You must move your books, Smith," said another boy, as the business of the day proceeded. "This is my desk now."

Tom knew that, and silently yielded up his desk and seat.

"Go at once to your new place, Tom, and turn Bowler out; I would," suggested another boy. But Tom would not do that; and with his books under his arm, he looked like some poor folk we have heard of who were turned out of house and home into the street, unprovided with another, with beds and bedsteads, tables and chairs, pots and pans, in wild confusion around them. He had not long to stand, however, in this state of perplexity. Half a dozen desks were speedily opened to receive the "goods and chattels."

"Put them here"—and "here"—and "here—till you have settled your account with Bowler," said as many voices; and Tom was relieved of his burden.

No; there was no mistake. The figures were right; the casting up was right. Bowler could not dispute this; nor could Tom.

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Mr. Weston, the patient teacher.

Bowler scowled, unbuttoned the loop of his gown, cast it indignantly on the floor, and marching sullenly to his old desk—*his* no longer—commenced emptying it.

But what ailed the young Cumbrian that he stood stock-still before the great railed-in mahogany desk of the master—the dread tribunal as it was to every erring schoolboy?

"Well, Tom"—even the teachers called our young friend by the familiar name—"are you not satisfied?"

"If you please, sir," he began, and then blushed a deeper scarlet than ever. His eyes, too, were swimming with tears.

Mr. Weston smiled encouragement. It was like him to do so. A kinder teacher than he never drew breath.

"If you please, sir, could not Bowler keep his desk? I don't wish to take him down, sir; I don't indeed. I am so sorry this has happened, sir."

"I am sorry too, Tom, if you are sorry; but really there is no help for it that I can see."

"Would you be so kind, sir, as to ask Mr. Deacon? I think he would not mind, this once—just this once, you know, sir."

"I will ask him, certainly, as you wish it: but it will be useless."

Yes, quite useless. Tom rose, and Bowler sank.

"I don't care a fig about it," said Bowler—he did, though; "it was all chance"—it was not though; "and

this is my last half at school : but if Smith shows any airs !—ah, let him if he dare.”

There was little danger of Tom’s showing airs. He bore his honours meekly ; and, but for an occasional fiery glance of his dark eye, and a paling of his full lips when his rival crossed his path in the playground, Bowler seemed almost to have forgotten his defeat.

The few weeks which intervened between the first of May and the Midsummer holidays were soon over, and, full of hope and expectation, every boy was looking forward to the morrow. It was the last day at school, and a long ramble in the fields and woods was to wind up the business of the half year.

That afternoon, in the thickest part of a shady cop-pice, two boys, separated from the rest of their school-fellows, who were widely scattered in groups of twos and threes, suddenly met, and faced each other. Suddenly, but not accidentally, for the smaller and younger had been, through that whole afternoon’s ramble, narrowly watched, and stealthily followed by the older and bigger.

“ Now, Smith,” said Bowler, for he it was, “ we will just settle our scores before we part.”

If the little fellow had doubted the meaning of the words he heard, he could hardly have misinterpreted the look and tone. He turned away hastily, and would have attempted to escape, but Bowler was too much in earnest to permit it. A few long strides, and the boys were within arm’s length of each other.

“ You didn’t think to shirk me so, did you, Mr. Monitor ?” said the big boy, with a sneer. “ Take that !”

The *that* was a vicious and heavy blow.

Poor little Smith shrieked with pain and fear.

"Cry away," said Bowler; "there is nobody near enough to hear you. I took care of that: now, will you fight, or won't you?"

"No," replied the agitated boy, "I will not fight. I don't know how to fight; and if I did I would not. It is like a coward, Bowler, to strike one so much less, and so much weaker than yourself:" and again the boy attempted to escape.

Vain attempt! Transported with rage, which had long been pent up, against the innocent cause of his disgrace, the cowardly lad struck the unresisting, weeping boy again and again to the ground—like Cain.

Evening came; and the boys, tired—more tired by far with their day's recreation than with the hardest day's work—returned schoolwards. It was not till they had reached this destination that one was discovered missing.

"Where is Bowler? Who has seen Bowler?"

No one had seen Bowler since the middle of the afternoon; and nowhere was Bowler to be found.

Long and anxious were the inquiries concerning the missing boy; and when, at length, it was quite clear that he had either been left behind or had intentionally absented himself, the young Cumbrian, who had until then kept as much apart from his companions as he could, was observed by his teacher to be in a sad plight, and on being closely questioned its cause was ascertained. Poor fellow! bruised all over as he was, head, body, and limbs, with the infuriated blows of his self-constituted enemy, his condition excited both compassion and just anger. The mystery was explained—

at least the truth was suspected, that, having taken his revenge, Bowler had feared the consequences, and had run away homewards. And so it afterwards proved.

Many years afterwards, when all the boys of that generation had become men—such of them, let us rather say, as yet lived—notices were issued in a large provincial town that a course of lectures on some scientific subjects would be delivered by a stranger, in the assembly room. Accordingly, a small number of townsfolk purchased tickets, and met together at the appointed time and place. Among these were a stout and pleasant-looking gentleman, one of the principal tradesmen of the town, and, arm in arm with him, his friend, thin, pale, and studious, the minister of one of its parishes. They took their seats, and looked around them.

“A poor speculation, I am afraid,” said the former to his friend.

“I fear so too, Mansfield,” replied the other, “if this is to be the extent of the audience.”

In a few minutes the lecturer made his appearance. He also looked round, and it was plain to see that he felt disappointed and anxious. He commenced his lecture, however, and succeeded in pleasing his audience. But presently an odd change was observed to come over him. He turned red in the face, then pale, his lips quivered, his ideas seemed entangled and confused ; he hesitated, he stammered, his voice became husky, and his mouth dry. These distressing symptoms excited the compassion of the lecturer’s small audience, and they good-naturedly clapped their hands and



stamped their feet, in the orthodox English fashion, by way of commendation and encouragement. Among these clappers none were more energetic than the clergyman and his friend.

This kind consideration had, in part, the desired effect. The lecturer, though he did not entirely recover his composure, was enabled to go on creditably, though his eyes seemed fixed, as by some fascination, to that particular part of the room where were seated the two gentlemen already mentioned; and it was an evident relief to him when his lecture was over.

"Mansfield," said the clergyman to his companion as they quitted the room, "do you know that lecturer?"

"No, my friend; how should I? And yet," he continued, "there is something in the cast of his eye and the shape of his mouth that puzzled me. I must have seen him before, somewhere; but then, you know, I meet so many people who are strangers to me that it is no wonder. But do you know him?"

"Yes; and you knew him once. You went to school with him."

"No, surely not. Dutton—Dutton—I don't remember a boy of that name."

"Dutton is not his name—at least, it was not his name as a schoolboy. Why he has chosen to alter it I cannot of course tell, but we knew him as Jack Bowler."

"Bowler! ah, so it is. How strange I did not recognise him! Bowler—Jack Bowler! How very odd! No wonder he was put out of countenance when he saw you—that is, if his eyesight and memory are as good as yours. What can be the meaning of his turning lecturer, and changing his name? Poor fellow! he looks

needy enough, and it serves him right, too, for his treatment of you. Ah, he was an ill-conditioned fellow, to say the best of him. Well, you won't go near him to-morrow night, I should think."

"Why not, Mansfield?"

"Why not? Oh, for no particular reason," returned Mansfield, laughing; "only, my dear friend, I should have thought you had had enough of Bowler in days gone by."

"That was a long time ago, dear sir; and you know our old master used to warn us not to stir up old grievances."

"True; but he did not tell us to forget them, that I remember."

"But the Bible, Mansfield, teaches us something still better. Well, good night," he added, as they reached Mr. Mansfield's door; "I shall call for you to-morrow evening."

Before the morrow evening arrived, however, an unexpected stop had been put to the whole business. The lecturer had disappeared, and the sale of tickets had been countermanded.

"He was afraid to face you again, depend upon it," said Mr. Mansfield to his friend when they again met; and he laughed heartily at the embarrassment into which Mr. Lecturer had been thrown on the former evening by the apparition of "little Tom Smith."

"I hope I did not drive him away," replied the clergyman, mildly; "I do not look very formidable, I think."

The story of the little Cumbrian is nearly ended—not quite.

"Blessings on him, whoever he is," said a sobbing

man, holding in his hand an open letter, from the folds of which, as he opened it, had dropped a Bank of England note of some value; "I did not think we had a friend left in the world, Caroline—not one, at least, who could help us; and to think of this!"

It was in a miserable-looking lodging, in a wretched street in one of the poverty-stricken parts of London, that these words were spoken. The listener was a wan and seemingly half-starved woman, nursing a feeble infant; while at her knee, or near it, were two other children, almost unclothed, and crying—perhaps in sympathy with their parents. The speaker was John Bowler.

"Has the letter no signature?—are you sure? Has it no post-mark?"

No, it had only the London post-mark, and no signature. It contained but a few lines of Christian kindness and consolation, and a hope that the enclosed trifle—ah! it was no trifle to poor Bowler—would assist in relieving his present necessities.

"Cannot you *guess*, dear husband, who this friend is?" asked the wife, with excusable curiosity.

The husband did not immediately reply; and when he did, it was in a low, troubled, broken tone, and with a burning cheek.

"I can guess," he said; "and I do. There was a boy at school—a little orphan boy—whom I hated, and—do not despise me, Caroline, though I despise myself when I think of it—yes, I hated the poor little orphan, and grievously misused him. Well, when I went on that unfortunate lecturing tour last summer, who should start up before me but this same boy—a rich man, as I afterwards found, and a clergyman! I knew him

directly I saw him; and I thought that he knew me too. I was thunder-struck, or conscience-struck, and could scarcely go on. There was I, a poor shabby adventurer, obliged to take a false name for fear of my creditors, while striving to earn a few shillings to keep starvation from our door! and there was he, evidently a prosperous man. I did not know which way to turn, and nearly broke down in the middle of my lecture; but he looked kindly—ay, Christianly—upon me, and that encouraged me. But how I got through the rest of the evening I don't know; and the next day, like a coward, I slipped off. I dreaded to see him again. You know the rest, Caroline, for that was my last attempt at lecturing. I had not the heart to try elsewhere, and that brought me home."

"And do you think that this—this letter came from him?"

"It did; I am sure of it."

Bowler was right; and it was but one of a long series of acts of kindness which he and his thereafter received from the young Cumbrian, who had not learned in vain the lessons of Him who said—who says to all—"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. v. 43-48).

And did Bowler profit by the lesson *he* thus learned? Yes, he did.

And now, young reader, what do you think of our little Tom Smith? Or rather, what do you think of the principles by which he was actuated?

"Ah," do you say, "it is all very fine this forgiveness of injuries, and loving our enemies, and overcoming evil with good; but——"

Yes, yes; we know there is a "*but*," and what it is. "But," you would say, "it goes against the grain to put up with bad usage, and to do good to them that have done us all the mischief which was in their power."

Yes, it does go very much against the grain, as you would say; that is, it goes against our natural tempers and dispositions. But "*they that are Christ's*," you know, have another rule to go by; and that rule teaches them to do what otherwise they would not do, and could not sincerely and from the heart do. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:" and this fruit springs up, and grows, and ripens in the heart where Jesus Christ reigns.

Dear young friends, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not loved His enemies, and forgiven the bitterest injuries inflicted on Him as a man; and if He had not, as "God over all, blessed for ever," done this and more, what would have become of us, rebels and sinners as we are? "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "He,"

you know, "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." In all this He has left us "an example, that we should follow His steps;" and just in proportion as we are like Christ, "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking," will be "put away, with all malice," and we shall "be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us."

Now, our young Cumbrian had been made "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" he had learned of Him who was "meek and lowly of heart;" and this was the secret of his forgiving and loving temper.

Yes, indeed; and the Bible had, as he told his friend Mansfield, taught him "something better" than to stir up old grievances: it had taught him freely to forgive, as he had been freely forgiven; it had taught him, too, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. And this is the temper we must all of us cherish, if we would be like Christ.

And if we are not like Christ—ah! what an IF that is!

Young readers, are you ever persecuted by some big, ill-natured schoolfellow, who, you think and say, has a spite against you? and does your heart swell in fierce anger against him? Be like Christ; forgive. Think of Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself: do not render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. Do you think you have no friend to take your part, and that it is hard

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to bear the spite and malice of another? Well, but you have a Friend, if you will make Him your friend—"a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" and He encourages you to come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. Cast your burden on Him, and He will sustain you.

But do you say you don't know how to do this; it is not what you are used to, to go to God by Jesus Christ; and you don't think He is your Friend?

Then it is high time for you to go to Him, seeking, by the help of the Holy Spirit, pardon for your sin and rebellion against Him. You are encouraged to do this by His Word; and in receiving His forgiveness, you will learn also *how to forgive*.





## II.

### GOLD MAY BE BOUGHT TOO DEAR.



"**B**OTHER the Latin!" exclaimed George, throwing from him his book in a great pet; "I cannot learn it, and I won't. I wish it had never been invented."

"And I wish," said one of his schoolfellows, interrupting him, "that you would mind what you are about, George; you very nearly knocked the inkstand over with your book; and if you had spilled the ink on my exercise, I wonder who would have written it again?"

"George bothers the Latin, he says," remarked a demure boy at the opposite side of the desk; "now I think it is the Latin that bothers him."

The boys laughed, and George laughed too; and with that laugh his momentary irritation subsided. He put out his hand for the offending book, and—though with no great liking for the task—made another attempt at the translation at which he had been labouring.

This was an evening scene. The following morning presented the usual appearance of George at the



bottom of the class, or very near it; his written translation blotted with many marks, and himself listening with impatience to the rebukes of his patient teacher.

"It will never do, George; this extreme carelessness of yours: this want of application, if not overcome, will be a plague and a drawback—yes, and a disgrace to you all the days of your life. Go to your desk, sir, and correct these egregious blunders; a mere tyro would be ashamed of them."

George looked ashamed, not of his carelessness, perhaps, rather of being lectured, as he afterwards said; but he obeyed.

A few hours afterwards, George and his favourite companion were walking round and round the playground, over which their schoolfellows were scattered. The two boys were gravely talking.

"Well, if I were you——"

"You would be just what I am, and do just what I do."

"If I were in your place then, George, I would pay more attention. What is the use of your being such an idle fellow as you say you are? These are your words, and not mine, you know. I declare I was ashamed for you to-day, and so I am every day. Do exert yourself; you can if you will."

"I tell you, Reginald," replied George, with some appearance of vexation, "that I am naturally so idle, nothing *can* rouse me; and besides, if I could exert myself, as you wisely counsel me, what would be the good of it?"

"The good of it! why, for one thing, you would avoid the disgrace."

"Not worth the trouble, Reginald—decidedly not."

"And for another thing," continued the wiser boy,  
"you would be *fitter*, by-and-by, to—to—"

"'To do my duty in that state of life,' and so forth,



THE TWO BOYS WERE GRAVELY TALKING.

as we say every Sunday, I suppose you mean," interposed George.

"Just so; at least it is near enough to what I was going to say," replied Reginald.

"Ah," said the other, "this is all very fine; but how is all this stuff—Latin now, for instance—to make me *fitter*, as you say, to do my duty, and so on?"

"Mr. Weston says——"

"Yes, yes, I know what Mr. Weston says about Latin, and so you need not trouble yourself to repeat it. It may be all very well for him; but look here: when I leave school (and the time is not far off, I hope), of what use will Latin and mathematics, and more than half of the other stupid things we are bored with here—I say, of what use will they be to me?"

"You don't know yet, George."

"Yes I do: they will be of no use. I am to live with my rich old uncle, who cares as much about Latin as one of his horses, and not a bit more. My time will be taken up in riding about the farm with him, or without him, looking after his men, and things of that sort. And after a time, when the dear old uncle is gone—not that I shall wish him dead; but he is old, and cannot live long—then the farm is to come to me, with plenty of money into the bargain, and I shall settle down into a country gentleman; my mother and sister will live with me, and won't I be happy then? But as to the Latin and all this school nonsense, it really won't be of any use, Reginald, and it is not worth the trouble of cramming my head with it. I wonder my mother should wish me to become classical, as she says. Only fancy the idea of a classical farmer! If I had to work my way in some profession or other, that would be a different thing, eh?"

Reginald did not carry on the argument which he had introduced. He was but a boy, though a thoughtful one; and he did not know how to reply to his

friend's long vindication of himself, except by saying—"I think, George, if your mother wishes it, that ought to be enough."

George did not attempt a rejoinder, but went on talking on a subject that never tired him—his great expectations and pleasant anticipations. George's mother was a widow, and far from rich; but she had a kind, old, and rather eccentric relative—the same uncle of whom George was frequently making a boast—who was rich, very rich, most of his acquaintance thought; and he had placed George at one school, and George's sister at another. During the holidays he had them at his house, and petted them; he promised George to make a farmer and a man of him, to leave him his farm—a very large one—and the greater part of his fortune; and, more than this, he meant to do it. No wonder, therefore, that George was elated with his prospects, and sometimes boasted of them; neither was it any wonder that he was often thinking of the pleasures of the time when he should be rich, and was building castles in the air, very tall and grand, when he ought to have been working out a sum or a problem, learning a lesson, or writing an exercise.

"You will come and see me, Reginald, when I get to Paston Grove for good, and when you have left school. You shall pay me a long visit—I know uncle will like to have you there; and we will ride and fish and shoot just as it suits our fancy. Ah! a wonderful deal better that will be than this stupid school work—won't it?"

"Thank you, George," said Reginald; "but I fancy I shall not be able to do that. I have no rich old uncle, you know, to set me up in the world as you have; and

directly I leave school I shall have to work at something or other; I do not know what, but most likely I shall have to be an apprentice; and then there will not be much riding and fishing and shooting for me, I suspect:" and Reginald could not help heaving a little sigh as he spoke. He half envied his schoolfellow's bright prospects. "But how silly it is," he continued, "to be worrying oneself with what is to be! 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' eh, George? Come, let us have done prosing, and have a good game. See, there goes Morris with the bats and stumps, and they can't do without us, I know; so come along." And in a few minutes the boys were hard at play.

"Go to now," wrote the apostle James, "ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James iv. 13-15).

Schoolboys, let the truth conveyed by these words be imprinted on your memories; take the lesson home to your hearts. You have need to be reminded that the bright hopes of this world may suddenly set in gloom and storm. You have need to prepare yourselves for life's uncertainties. Your thoughts and boasts are often, "*My* mountain stands strong; I shall never be moved;" and you little deem that it is but for God to hide His face and you will be troubled.

"George," said his tutor to him, in a kind and sympathising tone, the day after that in which he had

boasted to his friend Reginald of his pleasant prospect in life ; " George, you are to return home to-day."

" Home ! sir," the boy gasped, rather than spoke, for his master's tone and countenance alarmed him. " Is anything the matter, sir ? " and he burst into tears.

" I had a letter from your mother just now——"

" She is well then, sir ? Oh, I was afraid——"

" Your mother is well ; but your uncle—he is gone, George. He died suddenly, yesterday ; and your mother wishes you to return home for a few days. It is quite right ; you have lost a dear and kind friend, George."

" Yes, sir—oh yes, sir ! What shall I do ? oh, what shall I do ? my dear, good uncle !"

George was no hypocrite. He really had loved his uncle, or rather his mother's uncle ; and now that he was so suddenly made acquainted with his death, the selfish thought of being enriched by the sad event probably did not for a single moment, at that time, enter his mind. Sobbing bitterly, he left the school-room, and in less than an hour, his eyes still red with weeping, he stepped into a chaise, and was whirled away towards his home.

Many a speculating schoolfellow did the afflicted boy leave behind him, to wonder how much money would fall to George's share, and whether he would go at once to live at Paston Grove ; and many an envious sigh was but half-suppressed when these conjectures were whispered from one to another.

Two or three weeks passed away, and George returned to school. He was dressed in deep mourning, and he was pale, and seemed very sad. He said nothing to the boys about the journey he had made, or the events

which had taken place; and, curious as they were to know the extent of their schoolfellow's good fortune, as they termed it, they were too shy to put the question, "How much money did your uncle leave you, George?"

But though they did not find out this secret, they were not long in perceiving a most extraordinary change in George. He became suddenly studious. All his old habits of carelessness and unconcern were abandoned. He no longer subjected himself to the disgrace of being constantly "lectured" for his want of application. It was evident that he could be roused to diligence, and that he had been thus roused.

This was not the only alteration which, in this short time, had taken place in the boy. Formerly he had been careless in his expenses; the small stock of money which, after every vacation, he had brought with him to school, had been soon exhausted; and he had, more than once, incurred rebuke for borrowing from his schoolfellows for some unnecessary expenditure. Now, he began to keep his pockets so closely buttoned, and seemed so reluctant to part with a single penny from his refilled purse, that he ran great risk of being set down as a miser.

To crown all, George became so reserved and morose, that after a few attempts on the part of some of his better-tempered young friends to "draw him out," as they said, after his old fashion, they gave up in despair and anger, declaring among themselves that it was useless to try to please him; and that if he had lost a relative he need not be everlastingly sulky and cross, as if that would do any good.

"I do not believe," said one of the boys one day, "that it is his uncle's death makes him so queer and

sulky. No, no ; he is proud of his money, depend upon it, and thinks himself above us all because he is well off. I have no patience with such nonsense."

And no sooner had this new idea possessed the minds of George's schoolfellows, than they began to show in many ways their contempt of this pride of wealth in him. Excepting Reginald, scarcely one cared afterwards to notice him ; and even he was far less friendly than before. Thus the bereaved boy was solitary as well as sad.

But this seemed very little to move him. He plodded on doggedly and silently with his studies, with every appearance of determination to make up for the time he had lost. And he succeeded. He was no longer in constant disgrace, but often excited the wondering approval of his master by his strange industry and perseverance. What could be the cause of this sudden change, and would it be permanent ?

Yes, it was permanent. The holidays came and were over, and George, with most of his schoolfellows, returned to school. But even during the holidays the boy had not been idle. While the others had, most of them, laid aside their books, and forgotten as much as they could of what they previously learned, and thus had to get up again with great labour and much pains to the point at which they had rested, George had toiled on and reached a position which he had never before attained.

"You astonish me, George," said his teacher, "by your determination and industry ; nay, I am not sure that you have not worked too hard. We must not forget that the bow never relaxed will be strained. Be prudent, my boy, as well as diligent."

George's eyes sparkled with gratified self-approbation,



and from that time he worked on with still greater ardour. At the same time his moroseness in part wore away, and he again sought companionship. But there were some subjects of conversation on which he maintained a stubborn silence:—he could not be led to speak of his late uncle, nor of Paston Grove, nor of his own bright hopes for the future. There were signs, too, of settled unamiableness in the boy, which had not formerly appeared. In the ardour of competition, he took ungenerous advantages of his competitors; and did a puzzled schoolfellow need assistance in preparing a lesson, it was not of George that he sought it.

“You won’t keep that place long,” said he, with a disagreeable smile, one day when returning to his desk, to a class-fellow who had “taken him down,” and stood at the head of the class.

“Who is to prevent it?” asked the other, good-humouredly.

“You will see by-and-by,” retorted George.

Now, at that time, and in that school, there was a certain sort of dress known as bachelor’s robes, which the six foremost scholars were permitted to wear over their other garments by way of honourable distinction; and very dignified and scholastic did these same robes make the wearers appear. But as every privilege has its duty, so was it binding on each *bachelor* to wear his robes in class; and as laws are useless unless accompanied by a penalty for disobedience, it was ordained that a breach of this law should subject the offender to an ignominious removal to the bottom of every class of which he formed part.

It is easy to make laws, but not always pleasant to enforce them. Moreover, sometimes honourable distinc-

tions become burdensome; and privileges, when looked upon as duties, are neglected. Thus it came to pass that the bachelor's robes were more often laid aside than worn in class; and the penalty for disregard of the standing rule had not for many a long day been enforced. Nevertheless, the law remained unrepealed; George's class-fellow had broken it; and George became an *informer*.

"Since I am appealed to," said the kind and wise principal of the school, "I must enforce the law, William, which you acknowledge to have disobeyed. You will have to work upward from the bottom of each class to-morrow. As to you, George, had you been a little more generous, I should, for your sake, have been glad. It is possible, my boy, to be *too* just; it would better have pleased me had you suffered your teacher to overlook or to notice the offence, as he might see fit; and even now it shall be overlooked if you wish it. What do you say?"

George said nothing, and William lost his standing in the classes. He afterwards lost a prize also, which but for this day's misfortune would have been his; and George gained it.

"What a shame it was of you, George!" remonstrated some of his schoolfellows a few hours afterwards; "so mean! so shabby!"

"Not at all," replied George; "I had a right to tell; and if you ever catch me without my gown——"

"When you have got one;"—"You have not got one yet," retorted one and another derisively.

"When I have got one," continued George, calmly, "you may inform against me, and welcome."

Another vacation, another term time, and George was

nearly at the head of the school ; he stood second only to Reginald, his former friend, and the only school-fellow with whom he still held much intercourse. He had overcome many difficulties by perseverance and application. He was no longer the "idle fellow" he had once boasted himself to be. But, more unamiable than ever, the announcement that this was his "last half" excited not the least regret. And if, in mock heroics, a mischievous, laughter-loving boy *did* exclaim,

"Take him for all in all,  
We ne'er shall look upon his like again,"

the quotation was well understood, and correctly interpreted.

It was a busy day, and an exciting one, on which the various marks of each boy were cast up, and the several prizes awarded. Of the twelve to be given, three of the more valuable had that half year been fairly won by George. He had expected a fourth, and was mortified.

"You have done famously, George," said Reginald, as, that evening, the two boys took their once accustomed walk round the playground. Reginald was in good spirits, for the first prize, a pair of globes, would be his. "You have done famously, George."

"No, I have not," replied George ; "I thought I should have had the sixth prize as well."

"You were very near it ; and if you were coming back next half you would be sure of it then, and the first prize too."

"Yes ; what is the good of telling me that when you know I am not coming back ? 'A miss is as bad as a mile,' is it not ?"

"In your case it is, certainly," replied Reginald, laughing : "however, you will soon be able to console

yourself at Paston Grove for the loss of those prizes—eh ? ”

George turned quickly, and stared fiercely at his friend ; then, resuming his walk and former look, and without replying to the question, he went on—

“It is very provoking to lose that sixth prize. I might have had it if I had worked a little harder.”

“I do not know that, George ; if you had worked harder, Parker ” (the successful boy) “might have worked harder too ; and so you would still have been as you are. And besides,” continued Reginald, “I really think that three prizes at one time ought to satisfy any one. We should think for others as well as for ourselves, you know. It does not do to be selfish, George.”

“Oh, as to that, I don’t believe I am more selfish than you, Reginald. I suspect you would rather have *your* prize than that any one else should have it. And all right too ; every one for himself, *I* say. ‘Charity begins at home,’ you know.”

“Ay, but we have been told that it should not end at home ; and there is something in that, I think,” replied Reginald, gravely ; and the boys walked on a few steps in silence.

It was broken by Reginald. “George,” said he, “you are strangely altered since we first knew each other—three, ay, nearly four years ago.”

“Am I ? ” asked George. “How ? ”

“Why, you used to be so merry and good-tempered, and now you have become so—so——”

“So what, Reginald ? ” asked George, sharply.

“So dull and cross ; excuse my saying so, George.”

“Cross, eh ? I don’t know that I am cross particu-

larly. As to being dull, perhaps I have reason to be. Well, is that all?"

"No, not all, certainly. You used to be idle, and to make a sort of boast of it; and of late no boy in the school has fagged so hard as you have."

"No harm in that, at any rate," replied George.

"To be sure not. But then there is another thing, if you won't be offended, George."

"Oh no—go on; let me know my faults. 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend,' says the wise man." It was in an unpleasant, sarcastic tone that George said this; but Reginald did not choose to notice the tone.

"Well, then, you have become so stingy and covetous—at least, you seem to be so. What can be the cause? I should have thought now that you, of all others, would not have been so sharp after one single prize, and so vexed at not getting it, when you had three already; that is, I should have thought so of you once."

"Oh!" said George, coldly; "anything else, Reginald? Go on if there is."

"No, I won't say any more; you are offended now."

"Not a bit," said the strange-tempered boy. "Oh no, quite the contrary."

Another round of the playground in silence, broken this time by George. "I am altered, am I? Well, I suppose I am in some things. There may be a reason for it too. I'll tell you, Reginald."

Reginald listened, and George went on:

"You know very well how I used to brag about my rich old uncle, and Paston Grove, and all that sort of thing?"

Reginald nodded assent.

"Very well; and you know too that he died, and when?"

Yes, Reginald remembered this, he said.

"I have never mentioned it to any one, and nobody here knows it except our governor; but it does not signify who knows it now I am going to leave. When uncle died, it was found out that the stupid old——"

"The what, George!" exclaimed Reginald, in amazement. "Oh, George!"

"Well, well, I beg his pardon and yours; but the long and short of it is, uncle had not made a will. He was always talking about it, but he never did it. You can guess the rest."

"No, I cannot," said Reginald; "what difference did that make to you?"

"What difference! that shows how much you know about such things. What difference, indeed! Why, instead of being rich, as I always thought I should be, I am just little better than a beggar." As the boy said this, his voice became husky with emotion, and his companion pitied him from his heart.

"Yes, a beggar. There was a nearer relation than my mother or I—my mother's cousin; and all the property went to him, every bit of it."

"Dear, dear, I never dreamt of this. It must have been a disappointment. I feel for you, George."

"My uncle's heir was rich enough before," continued the boy; "but that did not signify. He took care to keep fast hold of Paston Grove, and all the rest; and here I am."

"But did he not give your mother and you anything?"

"Ah, well, I cannot say that exactly. He was very

gracious, and talked very fine; he pays for my schooling and my sister's, as old uncle did; and he says he will do something for us when we leave school, and so forth."

"That is kind of him, is it not?" asked Reginald; "I suppose he need not have done this."

"Kind! I don't call it very kind. He might have kept his money all to himself for what I cared. And I would not have taken his paltry gifts, nor come back to school again, if I had had my will; but my mother would have it so."

"But you are glad you did come back now, are you not?"

"Yes, I am," replied the boy: "at first, I was determined not to learn, but as I was on the road I altered my mind."

"Ah?"

"Yes, I did; I thought to myself, I won't let this disappointment beat me. I'll do my best, and make up for lost time, and get the stuff in me to work up by-and-by; and I'll take care of number one. There, now you know it all, Reginald. No, not all; I'll tell you something more," he continued, in a low, but determined tone: "Paston Grove shall be mine yet—that is, if I live," he added. "I'll work and scrape and save. I'll make the most of my cousin's help, till I can do without it; and then—— well, never mind; I know what I have to do, and I will do it."

Once more the boys walked on some minutes in silence; George perhaps pondering over his resolutions, and Reginald wondering at what he had heard, and feeling uneasy, though he scarcely knew why, at the glance he had obtained of the workings of his com-

panion's mind. He could not distinctly see, or seeing he could not have put into words, the fact that mortified pride and avarice had cast their influence over George's better feelings, and had begun to curdle his affections. Industry he knew was praiseworthy, and resoluteness necessary to success in life ; but, as shown by his friend, even these looked repulsive, if not absolutely bad. He turned to another subject for relief.

"What books will you choose, George, for your three prizes ?"

"I don't know yet : I do not know that I shall have books at all."

"What, not have books ? What then ?"

"I have books enough," said George ; "I shall not want books. I say, Reginald ?"

"Well ?" replied Reginald, perceiving that his companion hesitated.

"Look here : my three prizes, you know, come to just five pounds."

"Let me see," said Reginald, gravely. "Second prize, three pounds ; fifth, twenty-five shillings—that will be four pounds five ; seventh, fifteen shillings ; yes, five pounds altogether ; that is, five pounds' worth of books, you know : any books you like, that is, again, if your choice is approved by the higher powers."

"Just so," said George. "Well now, what difference would it make to Mr. Deacon supposing I were to have the money instead of the books ?"

"George !" exclaimed his amazed companion ; "I never heard of such a thing—never !"

"Perhaps not," said George, coldly ; "but I don't see, for all that——"

"How could such a thought have entered your head,

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George? Why, I would not take double the value in money instead of *my* prize : you must be joking."

"Joking! not at all. I heard a man say once that joking is the most foolish thing on earth; one gets nothing by it. There is good sense in that; and I have given up joking ever since I heard it. No, no, I am serious. And as to what *you* would do, or not do, that is not the question. I tell you that five pounds in money will be a great deal better to me than five pounds' worth of musty books; and what will it signify to anybody else? I have a great mind to ask the governor. I will too. Why not?"

"What have you to ask of the governor, George?" was echoed by a pleasant voice near them. The boys knew it to be the voice of the principal. They were just then close by a thick hedge which formed one of the boundaries of the playground, and separated it from the master's garden. "Come in, my boys," he continued, unlocking a gate a little further on, "and let me know what you have to ask. I have not been listening," he added, "and I really do not know what you have been saying; but I could not help accidentally hearing your last words, George. And if," he went on to say, "your request should be as reasonable as I hope it may be, it shall be gratified. Come in, and let us talk together as friends."

The two boys were rather confused; but they accepted the invitation.

It was a beautiful summer's evening, and the garden was in fine order. Mr. Deacon was fond of flowers, and before he resumed his inquiry he turned into a side path to show his scholars a new variety of some favourite seedling which he himself had raised.

"And now for your wish, George ; what is it ?"

George, thus taken unawares, found more difficulty in expressing his wish than he had anticipated. He looked somewhat foolish, in fact, and stammered out that it was of no consequence.

"Nay," said his tutor, "but you need not be afraid to mention it; you are not ashamed of it, I hope. Your young friend shall put it into words for you, if you please. What is it, Reginald ?"

Reginald looked at George ; George nodded, as much as to say, "Yes, speak for me."

"George was saying, sir," replied Reginald—"it was about the prizes, sir—his prizes ; and he was saying that books will not be of much use to him, he thinks."

"Eh ? his is a peculiar case, then. Well ?"

"And so, sir, if you would not mind, he would rather have——" and Reginald made an awkward stop.

"Don't be afraid," said Mr. Deacon, encouragingly. "He would rather have some philosophical apparatus, perhaps—an air pump, or an electrical machine, or a galvanic trough ? If so, I will make no objection, though I am not sure that books would not be more useful."

"No, sir, that was not it : George wishes to have, or that he might have, the money that the books would cost, instead of the books."

"Whew !" said, or rather breathed, the gentleman, in surprise ; and then turning to George with a very grave countenance, asked, "Has Reginald rightly explained your wish ?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, faintly.

Up the path walked Mr. Deacon slowly and silently, and as slowly and silently did he return down the path.

"You have made a mess of it," whispered Reginald to his companion.

"I don't care if I have," rejoined George in the same under breath, but with lips that quivered a little: "I cannot see why there should be any difficulty about it."

"I wish I was out of it, at all events," said Reginald.

"My boys," said Mr. Deacon, as he came again to the place in which he had left them standing, "I can conceive of such a request, under some circumstances, being not only reasonable but praiseworthy; perhaps it may be so in your case, George; and if there be any good reason for the exchange, it shall be made, though it will be a bad precedent. Come, then, tell me why you wish for the money rather than the books."

"It will be of more use to me, sir," George stammered.

"I am not quite sure of that, George. This must depend on the use to which it is put. You will not, therefore, think me unreasonable if I ask what immediate and important purpose you have in view for this money?"

George was compelled to acknowledge that he had none.

"I am afraid I understand you, then, my boy," said the gentleman, after many other questions and replies, which need not be repeated—and he spoke seriously and somewhat sadly—"I think I understand you to mean that you value money, not for the proper uses to which it may be put, but for its own sake. You wish to be rich; you *intend*—if God will permit it—to be rich; and you would like to have this certain sum, five golden sovereigns, to lay as a foundation for future accumulations. Am I right?"

Yes, so far right that George did not dissent from the way of putting the case.

"You have been disappointed, my dear boy, in your early hopes and prospects; your young friend here, is he aware of this?"

"Yes, sir, I have told him all about it."

"Then I may speak freely before him. I feel for you, George; I have felt very much for you. At first I hoped the disappointment had done you good in stirring you up to diligence and self-dependence. It is well for a young man to feel that, for his success in life, he must put forth the energies which he has at his command, and use the talents with which God has gifted him. Great expectations from others have too often an injurious effect upon us."

"And I *have* worked hard, sir, since then," George pleaded.

"I gladly bear witness to this, George; and I trust that, after all, I shall not be disappointed in the result. But the result will be disappointment, my young friend, if the attainment of wealth should unhappily be the only or principal object of your diligence; the end to which all your acquisitions of knowledge are to be the means. 'A man's life,' my boys, 'consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' These are the words of Him who was, in Himself, wisdom and truth. Do not disregard them, I pray you."

"But money is useful, sir," interposed Reginald, who wished to shield his friend from the imputation of covetousness; "is it not, sir?" he asked.

"Useful? Yes, Reginald, rightly employed. It is useful when we exchange it for bread, potatoes, or meat, coats, hats, or shoes, with common necessities of a like

nature. It is useful when it pays rent, taxes, and service, or when it provides us with fuel. It is useful, too, in a higher degree, when it supplies our intellectual requirements; in a still higher degree, when it enables its possessor to do good to all men; and in the highest degree of all, when employed for the glory of its great Giver. But money in itself, Reginald, is useless. We can neither eat it, nor drink it; it will neither clothe us, nor warm us, nor defend us. Nay, my boy, it is often worse than useless, it is positively and fearfully injurious. When it panders to our evil passions, and purchases for us unhallowed enjoyments; or when its possession becomes a predominant desire, and we make it our god, sacrificing to it health, integrity, talent, and soul—then money becomes a fearful curse. ‘The love of money,’ my young friends, ‘is the root of all evil’—so says the apostle; ‘which,’ he adds, ‘while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.’ It is very sad when this happens, is it not?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Reginald; “but people who are rich do not always love their money like that, do they, sir?”

“Oh no; there are those who are ‘rich in faith,’ as well as rich in wealth. But some do; and let me tell you that those who have riches have many temptations, and that the love of money is a growing and greedy affection—never satisfied. I was told, the other day, of a gentleman who had a large sum of money left him. Before this he was generous and happy; afterwards he became both miserly and miserable. Can you guess why? I dare say not: I will tell you. He found out that, what with his recently acquired property and his gold, he was worth, as he said, *only* eighty

thousand pounds; and he wished to be worth a hundred thousand. So, to attain this object, he began to deny himself much that he might have enjoyed, and to keep back from all means of doing good with his wealth. 'He could no longer afford to be liberal,' he said."

George sighed as he heard this story.

"Why that sigh, George?" asked his principal.

"A hundred thousand pounds is a great deal of money, sir: if I had but ten thousand I would not want to be richer."

"You think so, George, but probably you are mistaken. However, this poor man of whom I was telling you died miserably, and confessed at last, what multitudes besides have found to their cost, that 'Gold might be bought too dear.'

"And now, George, to come back to your request: I cannot grant it. You do not really need the money. Your relative's intentions towards you are liberal; and after you leave school you will be placed in a situation in which your talents and education, combined with industry and honesty, will make honourable way for you. Your necessary wants will be supplied, and the five pounds which you covet would either be needlessly spent or selfishly hoarded. I trust you will succeed in life, my dear boy; and if you should become rich, I trust also you will be kept from the snares of wealth. But remember, George, remember, both of you, that even 'Gold may be bought too dear'—too dear, my boys, if obtained at the cost of health, or happiness, or honour, or usefulness; and if taken in exchange for eternal life, *too dear*, MUCH TOO DEAR."

George left the garden dissatisfied and angry. "I don't care," said he to his companion, when they were

once more by themselves; "it is all very fine to talk away about such things, especially when one has all the talk to oneself, and must not be answered. So 'Gold may be bought too dear,' may it? Of course it may; but it may be bought cheap too, if one goes to the right market for it. Well, well; we shall see."

Some years ago, a middle-aged person lived at Paston Grove. This was our old schoolfellow George. *Paston Grove was his*: he had purchased it of a son of his uncle's heir. He was said to be very rich, as well as very miserable; and these are the outlines of his history, as you might have heard them from the lips of an aged man, his near neighbour:—

"Yes, sir, that is Master George, as we used to call him when the old gentleman, his mother's uncle, was alive, and when a boy, as he was then, came backwards and forwards from his mother's as he pleased, and spent most of his holiday time at Paston Grove. He was an open, kind-hearted boy then, full of fun; but he did not like work, they said, and as he said too. But he made sure of his uncle's estate, and so it was thought not to signify greatly.

"But 'there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip'—an old proverb, sir, but a true one; and Master George found it out by experience. Ah, you should have seen the way he was in when it was found that the old squire had died without making a will, and that all the property went to the next heir, Master George's cousin, or, more properly, his mother's cousin. However, there was no help for it; and the new-comer was a straightforward, honourable man. He did not give up his rights, of course; but he behaved handsomely to

George's mother, and promised to start George and his sister comfortably in the world, and to go on bearing their school expenses, as his uncle had done.

"Yes, sir, George went to school again; and when he came home for the holidays, everybody noticed what a difference there was in him. He had lost all his fun, and had turned out to be what they called 'a hard student:' you know what that means, sir, of course. His mother was pleased with this, and so was their cousin: but his altered manners—these did not please them so well; they had become so gloomy and cold.

"Well, sir, after a year or two, Master George left school, and went to London; and we saw nothing more of him for a long time, only about once a year he used to come to these parts for a few days to see his mother and sister; but at last he left this off. We heard a little about him, though, at times, through his mother—an old friend of mine, sir, and a Christian woman, one of the right sort, sir. She used to grieve sorely sometimes about George; not that he turned out badly altogether; he was not profligate, nor idle, but he seemed, she said, to have lost his former affection, and shut up his heart, as one may say, against the best things: he was all for money-getting; up early and late at his business, whatever that might be—and I do not remember now what it was, nor does it signify—and was never satisfied.

"Time went on, sir, and George became a man; he had served out his time, and came home for a few weeks. I saw a good deal of him then; he often called in to see me. But all his talk was about money, and what he would do when he got rich; how Paston Grove *should* be his, after all. I talked a little to him, sir, in



my way, and told him that money was not everything. He laughed at me, and said I put him in mind of a saying of his old schoolmaster, that 'Gold may be bought too dear.' 'And so it may, Master George,' I said: but he did not seem to think so then; what he thinks now would be hard to say. I told him, sir, that '*wisdom* is the principal thing;' but he pretended not to understand me. My heart ached for him, sir; for it was plain that he was set upon being rich; nothing else would go down with him.

"He went back to London, sir; and his cousin acted nobly in setting him up in business; and we heard, from time to time, that he was doing well as regards money-getting, that he was very clever in business, and very diligent; and nothing more was heard of him, good or bad, until, perhaps it may be ten years ago, when his cousin at Paston Grove died, and George's mother and sister lost their chief support.

"Ah, sir, that was a trial of principle. There were several to come in for shares of the property—the children, you understand, of this cousin; and they said that as George was now well able to support his mother and sister, they did not see why they should continue the annuity. But George thought differently, and refused—would you believe it?—to do anything for his aged mother, or for his sister. He could not afford it, he said. Sir, his mother did not ask him twice—not that she was angry, but she was grieved; she knew the excuse was a bad one, sir. From that time she and her daughter struggled on, until the young woman was married to a man who knew her worth, and who afterwards took care that the aged Christian should not know want.

"It was not long after this, sir, that news came of George's marriage. He had waited long, for he seemed to fear that the expenses of married life would keep him from his darling object. 'I am not rich enough to think about marrying,' was what he had always said. At last, however, as I was saying, he *did* marry. He married a woman with a fortune, sir; a woman for whom, by all accounts, he never had the least love; but she had money, and that was enough for him.

"It was soon after this, sir, that George came down here, where he had not been for many long years. He looked old then, very old and careworn, and melancholy. It was plain that he had parted with health for gold in the way of business, and it was almost as plain that he had parted with happiness for gold in the way of marriage. This was buying gold pretty dear, I think.

"Well, sir, he came to look after the Paston estate, which he was determined to have if money would buy it. And money did buy it. So he went back to London, gave up business, and brought down his wife. It was soon seen how little comfort poor George had got with all his money. His wife had a sad temper, sir, and was very proud. His own mother and sister were, so to speak, banished from his house; for he dared not invite them to see him, had he wished it: and I believe he did wish it, so long as they did not come to him for money; and this they had no need to do. But, wish it or not, they were soon given to understand that they must be strangers at Paston Grove.

"It was a bad day for the tenants when the estate fell into George's hands. He began at once to raise their rents, and to make them feel in other ways the difference between a considerate landlord and a

hard one. His workmen, sir, dread him—he is so harsh and unfeeling; and he is shunned by all the neighbourhood as a man who has no kindly feelings, no affection for anything but gold.

“Not that George is a miser, sir, as some people are miserly. He lives within his income, they say; but he has the good things of this world: though as to enjoying them, he seems past that now. If he has any pleasure, it is in scheming to get richer; for he is not yet satisfied with what he has, though he counts his property by tens of thousands. As to doing good with his money, you may judge that this is far from his thoughts—indeed it is; he lives to himself, sir.

“The worst of all is, that poor George seems dead to religion. The gold has entered his soul, sir. He knows better; his understanding is informed; he was early trained in the way of piety; one of the first books he ever read was the Bible, and he is acquainted with the gospel of salvation. But, sir, his heart appears hardened against it, and he is angry at the very mention of it.

“George’s mother died some few months ago, sir, after suffering deep distress of mind on account of her son. She saw him, at last, as she lay dying. What passed in that sad and solemn interview was not known; but it did seem to take some little hold upon him. Ah! sir, if he should be brought, at last, to consider those solemn words of our Saviour, ‘What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ and should give up his love of gold for love of Christ—what a mercy would that be! And it is possible; yes, sir, it is; for with God, you know, nothing is impossible: but ‘it is hard for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.’”

So then it seems that our old schoolfellow had parted with domestic enjoyments, family affection, health, the high satisfaction of being useful, and was, at least, running a fearful risk of parting at last with eternal blessedness for the lust of wealth. Was not this a hard bargain ? and may not gold be bought too dear ?

Dear young readers—schoolboys now, as we were schoolboys once—remember the Saviour's words, in the parable which He spoke when He said, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully : and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ? And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke xii. 16-21).

"What, then," do you say, "are we not to try to get money ?—not to be industrious, frugal, persevering ?"

If we were to say so, we should say a very foolish and wrong thing. On the contrary, be industrious, be frugal, be persevering ; and if industry, frugality, and perseverance, with integrity added to them, get you money—then get money.

But take care what it costs you besides ; *beware of covetousness* ; and "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Do not neglect your soul for your body ; nor part with the hope of heaven for the love of

wealth; nor lay up treasure for yourself, instead of being rich towards God; nor set your affections on earthly riches, despising those which are heavenly; for if you do, you will find that you have bought *your* gold too dear.

There is a treasure which you cannot buy too dear. He who, though He was rich, became poor, that the poor and guilty and lost might be made rich, offers pardon and peace and eternal life to all who, *on His terms*, will accept them.

Here is mercy and love! Yes; "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That mercy you need: without it, you will be everlastingly undone. Seek it, and by the aid of God's Holy Spirit, seeking it so as to obtain it, you will feel compassion for those whose only treasure is on earth; and this will be the thought of your heart—

"Go now, and boast of all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine:  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,  
And my Redeemer's mine."





### III.

## BARDOUR, THE TEMPTER.

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ABOUT the time that Mansfield was good-naturedly beginning to help the little Cumbrian out of his difficulties connected with the multiplication table, "a new boy" made his appearance at school; and something like the following conversation took place in the schoolroom during play hours.

"Have you seen Johnny Newcome yet?"

"No. Who is he?"

"Oh, I don't know his name—that is, I forget it, for Mr. Harpur told me. Barton, is it?—Barlow? No—Bar something, however; but that does not signify. But he is a dashing sort of fellow, they say. He came this morning, in a grand carriage of some sort or other, along with his father or his uncle—his uncle, I think; and they say he is a knight or a baronet, or something of that kind."

"Whom do you mean by 'he?' Is it the new boy or his uncle?"

"Why, his uncle, of course, He is Sir Somebody Something, they say."

"You have a strange way of expressing your meaning this afternoon, friend Willy; or your no-meaning, rather," said Mansfield, who was one of the speakers. "You call a boy whose name you do not know 'Johnny Newcome;' you speak of a gentleman being of a certain 'kind,' and you tell me that '*they* say' this and that. Who are the '*they*?'"

"Oh, never mind; if I were to tell you that James told me all about it—except what Mr. Harpur said—you would say it is against the rule to be talking with the servants; as if we could be always minding our p's and q's. But about this new boy—Bar—Bar—Bardour; ay, that is his name—Bardour: I shan't like him, I know; shall you?"

"Really," said Mansfield, laughing, "I do not know; how should I, when I have not even seen him? And how do you know that you shall not like him?"

"Why, of course, he will be proud, and very likely he won't speak to any of us, because his uncle is so grand."

"I don't see that exactly, Willy: but if it should be so, we shall not be obliged to say much to him; so we shall be quits so far."

"No, that is very true; but it is so disagreeable to have people about who think so much of themselves; and all that."

"There, you are talking nonsense again, Willy," said Mansfield, good-humouredly; "what does '*all that*' mean? and how do you know that this Bardour thinks much of himself? or if he should, how can you make him out to be '*people*?'"

"You are as bad as Mr. Weston, Mansfield," replied Willy; "you know very well what I mean. But never

mind Bardour ; that is not what I was going to say principally—about him, I mean ; I wish you would just do that horrid sum for me that I got such a scolding about from Mr. Harpur to-day. You will, won't you ?”

“I cannot exactly do it for you, Willy ; I must not, you know ; but——”

“You can if you like, only you are so particular ; but I know what I know for all that.”

“You must be clever then, Willy,” replied Mansfield, still good-humouredly : “and what is it that you know that you know ?”

“About Tom Smith : ah, you know. You do all his sums for *him*.”

“Who tells you so, Willy ?”

“Bowler says so ; and he says he shall complain of you for interfering with the boys at his desk. If Smith had asked you to do a sum for him, you would have done it in a minute. You may as well do it for me ; you have known me longer than you have him.”

“Bowler says what is not correct ; and he knows it,” said Mansfield, quietly ; “and he is quite welcome to complain, if he pleases. I have done no more for Smith than I am willing to do for you ; and if you will bring your book and slate, I will try to put you in the way of understanding the sum.”

Willy went to his desk for his book and slate ; and for a quarter of an hour or more Mansfield was good-naturedly attempting to explain the rule which puzzled his schoolfellow. But Willy was, on that particular occasion, dull of comprehension. He wanted to be at play ; and, every moment, his mind was wandering from what he was doing. In truth, he wanted, not to be helped to work, but to have his work done for him.



At length, after Mansfield, for the third time, was going over the same ground, Willy impatiently snatched away the book.

"It is of no use," said he, "and I won't try; and I think it is very ill-natured of you not to do the sum, when you could help me out of this hobble in a minute:" and he put away the slate and book, and went sulkily into the playground.

The next day Willy was "kept in" for the unfinished sum.

He was leaning sullenly on his elbow, playing with himself on his slate at "fox and geese," when some one looked over his shoulder; and turning quickly round, Willy saw that the observer was no other than Bardour, the new boy.

"So, so, Mr. What's-your-name, that is how you do your work, is it?"

Willy answered with a kind of sound between a groan of impatience and a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"What is that to me, you would say," continued Bardour. "Well, never mind; do you want any help?"

"Not at fox and geese," said Willy.

"Pho! Shall I do your sum for you?"

"Yes, if you like," replied the other.

"Well, I do like, then, for once in a way. It is dreadfully dull; you seem to be such a queer set here: I want somebody to talk to, and you are the best-looking of the lot, though I can't say much for *your* beauty. However, you may do; so let me see what you are sticking at. Oh, is that all? Here goes, then; give me your pencil."

"But you must not be seen doing the sum for me," said Willy.

"Must not! Who says must not?"

"Mr. Harpur won't let me off so."

"Mr. Harpur may do what he likes. What do I care for Mr. Harpur? However, I'll do the sum on my own slate, at my own desk; Mr. Harpur can't hinder me from that, I suppose; and you can do as you like about copying it afterwards."

Willy was not over-scrupulous; and when, a little while afterwards, Bardour laid before him the slate half covered with figures, he copied them upon his own, which he took up to the teacher's desk. The sum was correct, and Willy was released.

"Come now," said Bardour, "let us go out, and you shall be my Asmodeus."

"Asmodeus! What do you mean?" asked Willy, as he followed the new boy.

"Oh, don't you know? Well, never mind. You shall tell me all about these fellows, and the masters."

We will not follow the boys into the playground, for their conversation there was not particularly edifying. Let us take a passing glance at their characters.

Willy was one of a numerous class. He was not a genius—few boys are geniuses—nor was he a block-head; neither was he very indolent, when his mind or his body could be roused to exertion—otherwise he was. We have seen that he preferred that another should do his sum rather than be at the trouble of taxing his own brains, and that he had no objection that a law should be broken in the process. This was but a specimen of his general conduct. Like a person who, having good sound legs of his own, should choose to use a crutch until a crutch would be almost necessary to his moving; so Willy had weakened and crippled his

powers of mind by thinking and acting, not as his conscience dictated, nor after independent and due reflection, but in imitation of others, and lazily yielding to the stronger or more active mind of some one who might happen to be about him. Thus, though one of the oldest in the school, Willy was not a very bright scholar, nor was he, at any time, to be greatly depended upon for steadfastness in a right course. Like "a wave of the sea," he was "driven of the wind and tossed."

The new boy, Bardour, was a different sort of character altogether. He was a bold, daring, but unprincipled lad; clever in mischief and deceit, clever also as a schoolboy. His training had been unfavourable to his moral character, so had been the circumstances of his early life; and, thus far, he was to be pitied. His parents were dead; and he had been brought up in the house of his uncle, under the instruction of a private tutor. The uncle cared much about horses and dogs, and thought little about his nephew: the tutor cared much for his salary, and therefore had not neglected his pupil's head; but he had done nothing in the right education of his heart. It was not likely that he should have done much in this way, for he was secretly an infidel and a profligate man, though a good scholar. This sad deficiency in the most important part of the boy's education had not been supplied from any other quarter. His companions had been chosen from the stable-yard, where he had readily imbibed much that was vicious—nothing that was creditable or useful, unless we may except the knowledge of how to manage a horse, or to train a puppy.

In consequence of some discreditable transaction in which both Bardour and his private tutor were involved,

the latter had been dismissed in disgrace, and the former was "packed off," as his uncle expressed it, to school, where he would be more strictly looked after. But, unhappily, the uncle had not thought it necessary to put the schoolmaster on his guard, for he said, or thought if he did not say, "It is the master's business to find out what the boy is made of, and not mine to be speaking against my own nephew." Besides this, it is probable that the uncle did not really know much of his nephew's character, or did not attach much importance to what was wrong in it. Without warning therefore, and without any extraordinary caution, an adept in low vice was introduced into the school, the playground, and the sleeping-room.

As to Willy, the unexpected condescension of the new boy, whose uncle, being "a knight or a baronet, or something of that kind," was consequently, in his estimation, very great and grand, took him by surprise, and absolutely charmed him. He quite forgot his predetermination not to like him, and strutted with newfound importance by Bardour's side through the playground.

Mansfield smiled to see it; but he joined, for a few minutes, the two boys.

"I shall not like him," thought he to himself, as he walked away; "Willy was right there."

"Who is that prig?" asked Bardour of his companion, when Mansfield was out of hearing.

"Mansfield; he is a great favourite with the governor."

"Oh, he is, is he? He will be no favourite with *me*, I suspect. But what sort of a fellow is he?"

Willy replied by telling how Mansfield had refused

to help him out of his trouble with the "horrid sum."

"Indeed! Ah! he is one of the right honourables, I see. He won't do for me, then," said Bardour.

And thus he went on. In one hour, many injurious impressions had been made upon Willy's very susceptible mind; and it was prepared to receive more.

"Evil communications corrupt good manners." Bardour had not been many weeks at school before a very perceptible change had taken place in many of the scholars. A spirit of insubordination had sprung up, and habits of determined indolence or laziness seemed to have been suddenly formed. Quarrels, too, were more frequent: the school was broken into small bands or parties, which were constantly at feud with each other; and among one set especially there was a sad deterioration of morals.

This state of affairs was very uncomfortable to all, and it must have been very harassing and perplexing to the kind-tempered and conscientious master and his assistants: the more so, that they could not exactly discover the cause of the mischief which was too certainly going on. Indeed, they were not aware of the extent of it, and hoped that it was merely a temporary estrangement from right feeling, which would soon subside if not too particularly noticed. If they suspected Bardour as the fomentor of these new and unusual troubles, they had no particular grounds for suspicion. He seemed innocent enough.

In no boy was the alteration more visible than in Willy. Formerly, when under the influence of Mansfield, his conduct had been free from any gross mis-

behaviour ; but now that his allegiance was transferred to a new leader, he was constantly rebellious, sullen, and in disgrace.

Between Mansfield and Bardour there seemed to be a strange antipathy ; not openly shown, indeed, in disputes and violent altercations, but not the less complete. They avoided each other, rarely speaking together, and never joining in kindred amusements. In fact, they had no kindred amusements. Mansfield was a thorough hearty player ; he could throw all his energies into any game—cricket, football, or even marbles. Bardour sneered at this : he never played.

“What a big baby that Mansfield is !” said he, as he sauntered across the playground, accompanied by Willy and another satellite or two ; “what a baby ! Look at him, playing at marbles with Robinson and a lot of little fellows, and as eager at it as if it was the best thing in life. Bah ! it makes me sick.”

Willy tried to imitate the sneer ; but he could not manage it with a good grace. Had the truth been told, he liked a game of marbles too, and he envied Mansfield’s playfellows : there was a time when he would gladly have asked to join them ; but it would have been treason against his leader to do so now, so he sauntered on.

But though Bardour pretended to feel contempt for Mansfield, he could not despise him, however much he might try to do it. He therefore kept aloof from him and contented himself with reviling him at a safe distance, and with endeavouring to weaken his influence. In this he succeeded, and though Willy perhaps felt it to be both ungenerous and ungrateful to join in this cabal, he did not the less join in it. What could he do ? He must have some one to look up to, admire, and imitate.

If he kept on good terms with Mansfield, he must break with Bardour: and, upon the whole, it was more convenient to be Bardour's friend than Mansfield's. He made his choice accordingly, and kept to it.

And thus, amidst confusion, discomfort, suspicions, and jealousies, of which no one could trace the exact cause, the school broke up for the holidays. All were unusually glad to get away; and the puzzled teachers could only hope that at the close of the vacation a new leaf would be turned over.

The holidays were over, and most of the boys returned to school. Bardour and Willy were still close companions; by day they walked together, and talked together, generally apart from their schoolfellows: they occupied the same room by night; and to them the remainder of this story will principally relate.

"What nonsense all this is!" said Bardour, as one summer's evening, after prayer-time, the boys took a customary stroll in the playground, before going to bed.

"What is nonsense?" Willy asked.

"What? Why, these prayers. Prayers at morning, prayers at night, with long chapters: then there is church twice every Sunday, and a long lecture in the schoolroom into the bargain."

Willy had heard such things before from his companion, and he was past being shocked now: still he felt uncomfortable, for he had been trained to respect, at least, the outward observances of religion. It would have been well for him if he had had firmness and independence of mind and thought to turn from such communications when they were first offered. He might then have been kept from that rapid and fearful pro-

gress which, commencing with "walking in the counsel of the ungodly," leads on to "sitting in the seat of the scornful," and brings the soul nearer and nearer the verge of eternal ruin. But even firmness and independence of mind, though combined with respect for the outward forms of godliness, are but poor safeguards against temptation when the power of godliness is wanting, and dependence upon Christ for help in time of need is unthought of.

How happy are they who have obeyed the heavenly injunction, "My son, give ME thine heart;" who have cried earnestly to a holy and gracious God, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me;" who have experienced the purifying influences of the atoning blood which cleanseth from all sin, and the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God!

Yes, and how *safe* are such, compared with those who have desired and felt no such transforming power. Give your heart to Christ, then, young friend—school-boy though you be; you need such a Protector and Guide—ay, and Saviour too—as only He can be to you. Without Him, His salvation and His help, your wisdom, strength, firmness, and independence of mind, are folly and weakness. Yourself a rebel against His government and His claims, how will you be prepared to resist the importunities of your fellow-rebels—differing from you in this only, that they are a little older—to go on from one step to another in iniquity, until, like them, you have learned to glory in your shame? Give your heart to Christ, then; lay hold of His strength; make Him your refuge—His salvation your song—His law your delight: then, and then only, will you be safe.

Willy had never thought much of these things, and



—the truth may as well be told—like a very great number of schoolboys, he cared for none of them. He did not particularly wish or intend to be very wicked; nay, probably he thought religion to be a very good thing for those who liked it, for older people especially; but as for himself, why, he did well enough without it, for the present.

We need not continue the dialogue we have interrupted, nor repeat the wicked folly and ribaldry uttered by Bardour, who avowed himself to be an infidel, and that he had been led by his tutor.

The confession shocked Willy, who made some feeble efforts on the side of truth; but Bardour ridiculed him, and told him that he would lend him a book that would soon convince him, but which he must not let anybody see. Just then the evening bell rang.

“There’s the bell; we must go in now,” said Willy, in a sort of mental stupor. “It is bed-time.”

In another minute the playground was deserted, and the boys retired; some of them, in simple faith and childlike trust—may we not believe?—to commit themselves to God, through Christ, in hope of His pardon, peace, and sanctification; some of them, it may be, to hurry through a form of devotion, ere closing their eyes in sleep; some caring but little about either the form or the spirit of prayer.

Among these last was Willy. Ever since he had been the chamber companion of Bardour he had been ashamed to be seen bending before the God of his mercies.

He went to bed, however, somewhat perturbed in mind. Bardour had never gone so far before; and to Willy there was, after all, something rather awful in the character which his friend had assumed and boasted

of. An infidel! He, a boy, and yet an infidel! Well, he would think about it.

And then there was the book: he did not think he should read it. He did not particularly want to be an infidel. To be sure, it was very troublesome to be always making a sort of fuss about religion, or to be always thinking about it; but then—and then—and then he fell asleep.

The morning found Willy refreshed, and the gloomy chill about his heart gone. "What nonsense Bardour did talk last night, to be sure!" thought he, as he put on his clothes. "He was joking, no doubt."

No, he was not; he was never in more serious earnest. It may seem strange, but it is nevertheless true, that this boy Bardour, clever and shrewd, bold and daring, yet cunning, had, under the vile tuition of a base, designing man, been led to fancy himself a disbeliever of the Bible. When he had taken the trouble to read it, he had

"Read to doubt, or read to scorn;"

and when he heard it, it was with a mind steeped in prejudice and dislike.

Not that he understood what he was talking about when he took upon himself to pass his judgment upon it; but this was of little moment to him. He could talk; and he fancied he talked very cleverly: this was enough.

Besides, it was very convenient for him to think he had no faith in a book which constantly condemned his thoughts and practices. Moreover, there would be some gratification to his mind—some credit to himself—if he could make a convert. He was quite serious, therefore, in his attempt upon his young companion. Satan, the

great adversary of God and man, has a good many agents in the world; and this boy was one of them.

"Here is the book I spoke to you about," said he to Willy the next day. "Keep it close: they don't pry much into what we read here, that's one comfort."

Willy took the book. He did not wish—nay, so much was he in the habit of submitting to the mind and will of another, that he hardly dared to refuse it. "I need not read it," thought he.

But he did read it. At first, the daring profanity it contained made him feel uneasy; but these feelings soon went off, and, by little and little, as he could do it unobserved, Willy read the book through, and was vain of having done so. Thenceforward he could listen to Bardour's frothy declamations against the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, unmoved. He could even join with him in jeering at holiness, and in mimicking the solemn language of devotion. Still all this was a secret between the two boys; and so well did they keep the secret that, though they revelled in their sin, they were yet undetected. This was not all. We have spoken of one book Bardour had. He had others—vile and polluting to the imagination—and these, one by one, he cautiously put into the hands of his weak-minded associate.

Boys, dear boys, happy are you if you carry in your looks—whatever may be your complexion or form of features—so calm, placid, and outspoken a love of purity and regard for decency, as to compel the shameless to be silent in your presence. Happy are you still, if—should the word be spoken—your honest indignation rises at the insulting impurity, and causes the "vile person," whoever he may be, to feel himself "contemned," and to shrink abashed into the concealment

of his own polluted mind. Be it ever so with you. Beware of tampering with such a snare to your soul as is to be found in "filthy conversation," and in the pages of many a book. Be assured that no virtuous friendship can be formed with a schoolfellow, whatever may be his talents or acquirements, who can venture to introduce the former; and that no book is safe for you to read which you would hide from a mother's or a sister's eye. "Be sober, be vigilant," young friends; and put far from you "the instruction that causeth to err." It rests much with yourselves whether or not you will be contaminated by corrupt communications and bad books. If you will but set your heart and your face like a rock against them, not forgetting to seek—but, above all things, seeking—that pure wisdom which cometh from above, and making God, through Jesus Christ, your refuge and your strength, you may walk unharmed through even worse dangers than these:—

"Thrice happy youth! thy Maker's care  
Shall keep thee from the fowler's snare:  
Satan the fowler, who betrays  
Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

But if you do not thus act, and, on the contrary, invite the evil communications of those who are far advanced in shamelessness, you will not, it may be, have far to seek, nor will all the vigilance of teachers or parents shut them out: the poison will do its work; the ear and the eye will load the memory with defilement, and the stain will not come out—no, it will not. Well did the wise king of Israel know this when he wrote, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. iv. 14, 15).

But, once more and again, we earnestly counsel you to seek the pardon of *your own* sins, through the great atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the influences of God's Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul. Without these, you have no safeguard. With these, you will be strong, though with a strength not your own, to resist the allurements of vice and vicious companions. Remember always WHO it is that is "able to keep you from falling." Trust Him, dear boys, trust Him.

About two miles from the school was a village notorious for the ignorance and depravity of its inhabitants, and also for a large three days' fair annually held in it, which was equally notorious for its scenes of profligacy and vice. Many attempts to abolish this fair had been made, but unavailingly.

Boys are not very wise in such matters. Year after year, as the fair time drew near, some of the school-fellows of whom we write were apt to become discontented. They thought it hard to be kept shut up in school while so many were enjoying liberty and fun. They could see no such great harm in going to a fair for once in a way, and considered it "too bad" that their master should be so particular. "He might as well give us one day out of the three," said they, as regularly as the year rolled round; "we would not get into any mischief. Where is the good of being so strict?"

It is almost needless to say, that if such complaints and longings as these reached the ears of the master, they did not move him in the wished-for direction. He was inexorable, and took no notice of them. The fair indeed! Go to the fair!

A few days before the fair, in the year of Bardour's pupilage, the annual restlessness commenced. It was more than usually strong, for the spirit of insubordination of which we have spoken gave it life and activity.

Around Bardour was gathered a group of the repining ones. He was now the acknowledged leader in anything denoting rebellion, though still he carried on his opposition to authority with an air of good-natured dash, which made it sometimes difficult for his teachers to be very angry with him. They did not know the worst part of his character.

"All nonsense, Bowler; I tell you we will go—we must; I would not lose the fun for anything. You have no idea what sport we could have."

"No doubt of it, if we could get there; but what is the use of talking about it? We can't go, you know, and——"

"Nonsense!—can't go! I say again, the governor will let us go if we ask him."

"No, no, no!" exclaimed half a dozen voices at once.

"Was he ever asked?" inquired Bardour.

No, never, certainly—all were sure of that; it was too well known what Mr. Deacon's sentiments about the fair were.

"Why," said one, "he was one that tried, two or three years ago, to get it put down: the idea of asking him to let us go!"

"Well, for all that, I don't see anything so preposterous in the idea," said Bardour; "and I vote for asking leave."

"All very fine," replied Bowler; "but who'll 'bell the cat?'"

"Oh, we will all go in a string; or what do you say to a round robin?"

No, no, oh dear no: all hung back in alarm at the very mention of it.

"What a set of cowards you all are! what is there to be afraid of? Well, if you won't, I will—I and friend Willy here. We will go at once and ask for the holiday—eh, Willy?"

Willy would gladly have retreated from such undesirable pre-eminence; but from being Bardour's companion he had become almost his slave. He dared not refuse. He tried, however, to express his dissent. "What will be the use?" he began to ask.

"We'll see," replied his bolder companion: "come along, the governor's just gone into school—come;" and he half dragged his friend along the playground.

They soon returned to the half-scared boys. Willy looked very sheepish; Bardour very furious; and he applied some opprobrious names to the head-master in a not very subdued tone, as he mingled with the rest.

"I told you it would be of no use," said Willy; "and you have only got me into a scrape—you have."

"What did he say?—what?—what?" asked the gaping group of their deputation.

"Say!" repeated Bardour fiercely: "go and ask yourselves, if you want to know. If you had not been a pack of cowards, you would have known without being told."

"No more a coward than you," said one of the boys thus taunted; and a quarrel ensued, which almost ended in blows. But it passed off, and very little

more was said about the fair: the subject seemed dropped by common consent. It was noticed, however, and afterwards remembered, that during the succeeding days Bardour and Willy kept almost aloof from their companions; that they were constantly in close private confabulation; and that Bardour especially was remarkably gleeful. Some huge secret seemed to exist between them.

One day—it was the third day of the fair—as the boys were about to leave the breakfast-room, they were requested to remain. The teachers looked grave; and the scholars, catching the infection of gravity, looked so too, though why they knew not.

Presently, the master entered. The boys had seen him before, when they had met for morning prayers, and the change that had taken place was almost alarming—quite alarming to guilty consciences, if any were there. Accompanying the master was a stranger, shabbily dressed, dirty, unshorn, and otherwise ill-looking.

“What’s the matter now?” whispered one boy to his neighbour.

“Hallo,” said another, in an equally subdued tone, “look at Willy; why, he is as pale as a turnip, and trembles like a leaf; what is the meaning of all this?”

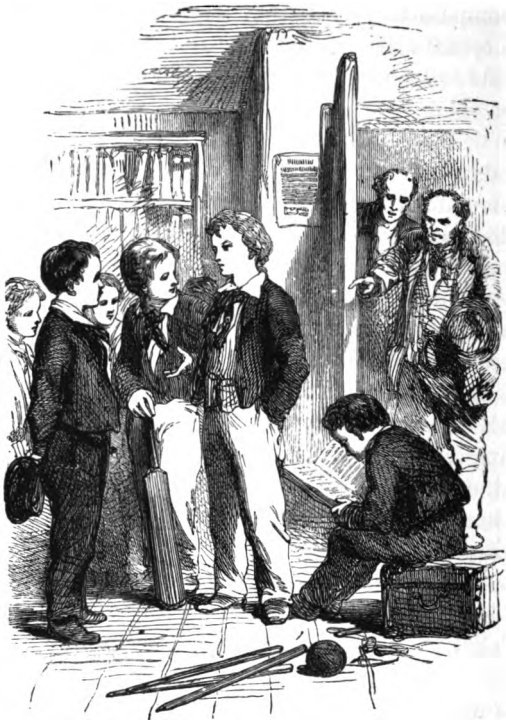
This was by-play. Meanwhile Mr. Deacon looked sorrowfully around, then turned to the man, who stood a little nearer the door—“Have the kindness, my friend, to point them out to me,” said he.

“*Them!*—point them out!” repeated one wondering boy to his next companion as the man turned his inflamed eyes from one face to another.



What could it mean? Well, in this case ignorance was bliss.

The man was not long in his survey. "Them's them," he said, pointing with one hand to Bardour, with



ACCOMPANYING THE MASTER WAS A STRANGER.

the other to Willy. It scarcely needed this, for their looks condemned the two boys—Willy especially. Bardour tried to brave out the accusation, whatever it might be, and to put on a look of innocence. But it was a poor attempt.

"Come with me, you two," said Mr. Deacon.

"Why, sir? what have I done?" asked Bardour: but the words seemed to die away on his lips, and without waiting for a reply he slowly left the room, accompanied by Willy.

"The boys may go into school now, Mr. Weston," said the master, before he withdrew: and they went accordingly.

"What is it all about, Mr. Weston?" asked one as they went: but Mr. Weston could not or would not say.

The head-master did not enter the schoolroom that morning, nor did Bardour or Willy; and lessons were not very perfectly repeated, nor sums very correctly or expeditiously worked, nor copies and exercises very neatly written. In the afternoon a half-holiday was given, and a long walk taken: Bardour and Willy were still absent, and the boys wearied themselves in vain in striving to fathom the mystery.

Day after day passed, and still no fresh light was thrown upon the subject, except that it was known that the two boys—whatever had been their offence—were removed from their former bedroom, and were separately confined in two of the topmost chambers of the house, and that they took their meals and continued their studies thus solitarily. What could they have done?

The holidays came, and the two prisoners had not been seen. The holidays were over; and when the boys—those who had not done with school—returned, Willy was among the number, and he took his former place at his desk, as though nothing had happened. Bardour was no more seen.

Willy's old companions were generous: much as they

burned to know the secret, they forbore to ask it of him. He was generally silent; and gradually the remembrance of his separation and presumed disgrace died away. But, after all, the mystery was not completely hidden; and some such tradition as this long hung about the place, and was handed down from one set of boys to the next:—

“Bardour—ah! he was a sad fellow: he did not stay long; but whether he was taken away or turned away, no one knows but the head-master—at least none of the boys ever knew.

“There was a strange piece of work one fair time. Bardour wanted to go to the fair, and of course he was refused; so what did he do but persuade another of the boys, who slept with him in the little room that looks over the playground, to get out of the window at night (the window is safely barred up now) and start off to the fair; and this was how they managed it:—Just before the fair time, a young fellow who had been a groom, or something of that kind, at Bardour’s uncle’s, came to live near the school, and to work at the livery stables; and he used to come at night over the fence into the playground, and help the boys to get down, and then went with them to the fair. They followed this plan two nights.

“And pretty pranks they played there—dancing in the booths, gambling and drinking, and more than that, till two or three o’clock in the morning, and then getting back to bed. But it was found out in this way: the groom passed some bad money at one of the booths; and after they had left, the man to whom he gave it made the discovery, and followed the three all the way to the playground, and saw the two boys get in

at the window. This was enough for him; so the next morning he came and made his complaint. He knew the two boys at once, and they were kept away from the others all the rest of that half year.

“And this was not all. The stable-helper who went with Bardour was horribly frightened at what he had done, and turned evidence against him; and a shocking tale he told. Bardour’s boxes were examined, and several books were found—such books! Bardour declared they were not his, that he knew nothing about them, and that somebody else must have put them there; but of course *that* would not go down with the master.

“Willy, Bardour’s companion, came back the next half year, and nothing more was said or done to him; only the master kept a sharp look out after him, till he left school; and so he did after the rest of the boys, especially the bigger ones. And as to Willy, he was not very fond of talking about Bardour; but one way or other, a bit at a time, thus much of the story came out.”

This legend, conned over occasionally, for want of other subjects of conversation, or by way of change, is not probably far from the truth, though it does not convey “the whole truth.” Indeed, poor Willy’s experience of the fearful consequences of yielding to temptation, and the folly of being led into “almost all evil” by the example and persuasion of a strong-minded sinner, was sufficiently vivid, one would suppose, to teach him a lesson for life. It is to be hoped he profited by it. But though he might be sorry—though he might even sorrow “after a godly sort” for what he had done, and for the wickedness

into which he had been led, he could never unlearn what he had learned, nor be "simple concerning evil." It is well, dear young reader, to be brought back from our wanderings : but is it not better, do you not think, never to wander at all from the paths of purity and true wisdom ? If our old schoolfellow Willy became penitent, and afterwards loathed the sins into which he had once been led, I am sure he has often blushed with shame, and has despised himself when he has thought of his weakness in yielding to temptation, and the avidity with which he became a partaker in another's guilt, and would be able to give a sad and solemn answer to the question, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death."

But perhaps Willy did not really regret his past folly. It may be that he never truly repented having given way to the seductions of vice. It is not a thing improbable that the vile books he had been tempted to read, and the scenes of sin he had been drawn in to witness, and in which he had been induced to share, produced effects which clung to his soul like an awful disease ; and that at length he found in his own bitter experience, that "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin : and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James i. 15). It is not long since we saw one who, like Willy, had been drawn away and enticed, when a schoolboy, into shameful wickedness. Pale, haggard, worn, and feeble, he is old before his time, and seems hastening to an early grave. Is he ashamed ? does he mourn his folly ? has he repented and sought mercy ? It may be that he has not ; but that, on the contrary, his heart is hardened, and his conscience

"seared with a hot iron." Take care, young reader, how you venture to disregard the first intimations of your conscience that you are going wrong, for nothing is more true than that, generally,

"Sinners that grow old in sin  
Are hardened in their crimes."

It may be that you *have* given way to the seductions of some bad, bold companion. Is it so? Listen, then, to the voice that calls you to return—the voice of Divine mercy and compassion: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" and "the blood of Jesus Christ," God's dear Son, "cleanseth us from all sin" (Isa. i. 18; 1 John i. 7-9).

"Return, then, wanderer, to thy home,  
Thy Father calls for thee;  
No longer now an exile roam,  
In guilt and misery:

Return! return!

Return, O wanderer, to thy home,  
'Tis Jesus calls for thee;  
The Spirit and the bride say, Come.  
Oh, now for refuge flee:

Return! return!

Return, O wanderer, to thy home,  
'Tis madness to delay;  
There are no pardons in the tomb,  
And brief is mercy's day:  
Return! return!"

And Bardour—what became of him? *This* became of him: he soon cast off every remaining restraint, banished every virtuous affection, and became a slave to his own vices. In his future life was shown the baneful effects of those principles of which, in youthful vanity, he had boasted, which “leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor around us to awaken tenderness, wage war with heaven and with earth—whose first object is to dethrone God, whose next is to destroy man.”





#### IV.

### GOOD FUN, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.



**T**HERE are a few things, at least, which some of the boys who were educated at "our" school have not yet forgotten, even after the lapse of thirty years. The first of these memorable things is the Crossway Oak, which grew, as its name implied, at a place where four roads met. Strange stories were told of that old tree. Some said that it marked the spot where a wretched suicide had been buried; and others asserted that it had been planted over the grave of a holy missionary, in times long gone by. Whichever of these and other traditions which were handed down of the Crossway Oak were true, or whether they were all alike fabulous, one thing is certain—the tree was a very old one. Another thing is also equally certain—the favourite half-holiday schoolboy ramble was to the Crossway Oak: but whether the greater attraction was in the old tree itself, in the two miles of pleasant road that led to it, or in the cake shop half a mile beyond, we shall not pretend to decide.

Then, who of all those schoolboys can have forgotten



poor old blind Dick, and his two donkeys? Not that Dick Watson was altogether blind; he could, as he used to say, tell black from white, and could find his way, without much difficulty, for miles round the country—he and his donkeys. But the light of day rather glimmered than shone upon him; the greater shame for those who so cruelly mocked and deceived him.

Poor Dick was the husband of Mrs. Watson at the cake shop; both man and wife were old, and not less lame was the one than the other was blind. It was as much as the poor cripple could do to hobble from her arm-chair to her window, and serve her young customers with what they wanted. The more shame, we say again, to those who had the heart to bring trouble upon her.

Blind Dick, as everybody in the neighbourhood called him, was not often to be found at home. While lame Mary was making her delicacies and minding her shop, he was generally travelling the country with his two donkeys and his cart, carrying on a more extensive trade in fruit, when fruit was in season, and in sand, when he had no fruit to sell. Once every week, almost all the year round, was poor Dick looked for at the playground, for he was a good-natured, liberal dealer; the boys knew well that a penny would go further with him, for apples and pears and plums, than three halfpence elsewhere. He was a kind-hearted man, there could not be a doubt; for he loved even his donkeys, and his donkeys seemed to love him too, so far, at least, as donkeys can love. The poor old man—for, with all his industry and his wife's contrivance, he was poor—had a long story to tell about his donkeys, and he was never tired of telling it; how many years he had had them, what trouble they

had given him in their education, how he had overcome their naughty tricks by kindness, and how useful they were to him now they knew his ways ; so that though he should some day quite lose his precious sight, as he feared, yet that they would even then save him from idleness and want by their experience and superior sagacity. Poor blind Dick ! he little thought that some who listened with such apparent interest to his simple story, and who, moreover, so often experienced the good effects of his liberal dealing, could wickedly almost bring about his ruin ; but so it was ;—and thus it was.

In high spirits were Frank, Harry, and William as they made towards the Crossway Oak. They had fairly earned an extra half-day's holiday. The afternoon was fine, and the autumn tints on the trees looked so beautiful, and reminded the boys so vividly that Christmas was coming, that it would have been wonderful if they had felt dull. On one side of them the road was fringed with a thick wood, which covered the rising ground for some miles in that direction. Oh ! that was the wood for nuts and blackberries ! On the other side the ground gradually descended until it met with a broad level, known by the name of "The Salts," which extended to the sea-shore, at more than two miles distance. In general these Salts were dry, and covered with herbage, except that a creek of the sea intersected them ; but at high water, and especially in spring tides, the whole surface was covered with water, swelling and roaring as though the ocean had broken from its bounds, and threatened a second deluge. A grand sight were the Salts at these times—so, at least, the schoolboys thought it ; and it was at just such a time that Frank, Harry,

and William started for the Crossway Oak. With this fine prospect, then, on one side, and the inviting nut wood on the other, we need not be surprised that the two miles of road occupied two hours of good time, and that the distant church clock struck four just as they reached the Crossway Oak. But what care boys for time? There were yet two hours good for reaching school again (home they would not call it), and the distance might be got over in half an hour. So they climbed the tree; they ran races round it; they cut switches off it; and just as they had nicely peeled their switches they heard a trotting on the road, and then a loud bray, and looking, they espied poor blind Dick's two donkeys, at full speed, making towards the Crossway Oak. They too seemed to have obtained a holiday, and to be making the most of it.

"Let us have a ride," shouted Frank; and in a few minutes the donkeys were caught and mounted. Merrily did the boys gallop their unwilling steeds round and round the Crossway Oak, and to and fro on the road, flourishing their wands, and kicking with their heels, laughing and joking the while, until they grew tired of the sport.

"And now for a good bit of fun," said William, as he dismounted. "Let us drive the donkeys into the wood, and leave old Dick to find them."

It was a sinful thing to take pleasure in the thought of giving labour and perplexity to a poor half-blind old man; but neither Harry nor Frank gave himself time to consider whether William's proposal was a good and honourable one. It would be rare fun, they thought and said; and as they thought, so they did. They chased the poor animals up the road which led through

the wood ; and, glad at all events to obtain their freedom, the donkeys were soon out of sight and sound. "Capital fun !" shouted the boys again, as they returned to the Crossway Oak, and proceeded to Dame Watson's cake shop, to crown their holiday with her good things.

They had not gone far before they met poor blind Dick himself. He was trudging on at a rapid pace—rapid, at least, for him ; and a shade of care might have been seen on his good-humoured countenance, if the boys had looked closely into it. But they were so full of the "good fun," that they could think of nothing else. "Here comes Dick after his donkeys," whispered Frank ; "oh, what fun !" It was, indeed, as they supposed : for he no sooner heard their voices than he put the question to them, "You have not seen my donkeys, have you ?"

Alas, that we should have to record it : but it is too true that, instead of honestly telling the truth, or even so much of it as that the animals had taken the road into the wood, the boys plunged themselves deeper into sin by telling a most wicked lie—and all for *fun*. Oh, how many lies are told for fun ! and how true, and yet how fearful is that Scripture, "Fools make a mock at sin !" Had either Harry, William, or Frank been branded by their schoolfellows with the odious name of liar, how would they have resented it, and denied the charge ! but now, to carry out a senseless joke, they could even glory in their shame.

"Oh yes," said they, "we saw your donkeys, Dick. They were running away like mad things down the road to the Salts."

Loud and long was the laugh which burst from them

when Dick was out of hearing, and that was not long first ; for at mention of the Salts he wrung his hands in despair. " Poor silly things ! " he said ; " they got out of my paddock, where they were well off ; and if they get on to the Salts now the tide is running in, they'll be drowned, they'll be drowned, they will ; " and off he ran, faster than ever.

Not to lay more blame upon either William, Harry, or Frank than they deserved, we must say that they, of course, knew that there was little danger of the animals being drowned ; if there had been, they would, in all probability, have accompanied poor blind Dick, and assisted him in saving them. It would have been " good fun " to have spattered through the swampy Salts in a donkey chase. The worst result of their joke would be, as they supposed, that blind Dick would have a lost journey, and a little anxiety ; and that the poor animals would be sure to find their way home before night ; and then all would be well. But we shall see how far they were right.

In the meantime the boys did not think it wise to continue their walk to the cake shop. Blind Dick had not recognised them, but lame Mary would know them well enough, and if the trick were found out, it might be the worse for them in more ways than one. So they returned, full of glee at the capital joke they had played. They were prudent enough, however, to say nothing about the matter to their schoolfellows, who could but wonder what mighty secret the three boys had got hold of to make them so merry for many days after their walk to the Crossway Oak.

The day came when blind Dick should have paid his weekly visit to the school with his cart-load of apples ;

and many were the sly schemes which Frank, William, and Harry had contrived for drawing from him the history of his adventures on the Salts. But, to their disappointment, Dick did not arrive. This was strange; for his best fruit was just in season, and he was sure of a good market in the playground. The jokers, especially, were more than disappointed; they became secretly alarmed, though they tried to conceal from each other their fears. They could not but feel that there might be danger to a dim-sighted and feeble old man in venturing upon the Salts when the tide was running out, and the creeks and ditches yet full of water; and they began to wish that their trick had remained unplayed. So true it is—

“If thou do *ILL*, the joy fades, not the pains;  
If *WELL*, the pain doth fade, the joy remains.”

In truth, for the truth should be told, they could not avoid thinking that there was no real fun, after all, in putting an old man in peril; and besides, the lie they had told began to trouble their consciences.

Another week passed, and the young culprits buoyed themselves up with the hope that on the succeeding Saturday blind Dick and his donkeys would make their appearance. They no longer, however, found courage to get together and have a sly laugh at their old trick; they rather shunned each other: and when, at length, another Saturday came, and no poor blind Dick, they all became seriously alarmed, and could keep council in their own hearts no longer. True, when they plucked up courage to mention the old man's name, Frank tried to laugh at William's fears, and Harry to find a good reason for blind Dick's absence; but it would not do:

it was plain that each would have given his whole quarter's pocket money to have heard one shout of Dick's cheerful voice—"Now, boys, here's your nice golden pippins!"

Saturday afternoon was a school holiday thirty years ago, just as it is now; and on this particular afternoon the boys had been promised a good walk; so when the time came, it remained to be discussed which road they should take.

"To the Crossway Oak!" shouted several of the boys; "and then," added another, "we can see what is become of blind Dick." It was neither Frank, Harry, nor William who said this. Anxious as they were to know why the old man had kept away for two weeks, they dared not express their anxieties; could they have managed it, they would much rather have remained in the playground, or taken a walk another way. Conscience made cowards of them. However, they knew it would be useless for them to object to the favourite walk, so, with heavy hearts, they prepared to accompany their schoolfellows. As is often the case with those whose consciences are ill at ease, these unhappy boys endeavoured to conceal their uneasiness under a mask of unusual gaiety. They ran into the nut wood, shouting with all their might, and laughing loud when there was nothing to laugh about. They proposed a game at hunt-the-hare, and carried on the game so violently that the usher, who was with them, was obliged to interfere, and recommend a little more moderation in their sport. Alas! "the laughter of fools," as the Bible tells us, is like "the crackling of thorns under a pot"—a sudden blaze, a great noise, and then all is over. So it was with the glee of William, Harry, and Frank. While all the

rest of their playfellows were as happy as a holiday, a pleasant walk, a fine day, and light hearts could make them, the three self-accused culprits were wretched with all their attempts at mirth.

The Crossway Oak was gained at last ; and then, of course, the boys—all but Frank, William, and Harry—could not be satisfied until they had paid a visit to Dame Watson and her cake shop.

“ I shall stay here while you go,” said Harry ; “ for I am too tired to go any further.” “ And so am I,” said Frank.

William was rather more courageous ; or, it may be, he was afraid of being suspected, supposing any harm had happened to poor Dick ; so he went on with the rest. We must accompany them, too, and leave, for a while, Frank and Harry under the Crossway Oak.

All William’s vivacity was gone when he left his two companions in folly behind him. He lagged behind the other boys, and pretended to be searching for blackberries in the hedge ; and when they arrived at Dame Watson’s cottage, he hesitated for more than a minute before he could follow them into the little shop. At last he made a desperate effort, and stepped over the threshold in time enough to hear what realised his fears, and smote him to the heart with remorse.

“ Ah, deary me !” the poor, lame old woman was saying ; “ I am afraid I have not much that will suit you to-day. My stock is very small now.”

“ How is that, dame ?” asked one of her young customers.

“ My poor old man——” she said, and then burst into loud sobs which, for a time, stopped her utterance. But, becoming presently more composed, she gave the



listening, and we are glad to say, commiserating school-boys, the following story of her misfortunes.

She said her husband had turned his donkeys out into their little field to graze ; but they, "naughty things !" were not satisfied with that, but must needs break through the hedge, and gallop quite away. How long they had been gone she could not tell ; but gone they were late in the afternoon. So poor Dick took his stick in hand, and went to look after them. "He was gone a long, long time," continued the poor, crippled woman, "and when he did come back, after dark, it was without the donkeys ; and, dear sirs, you should have seen what a way he was in ! He had been all over the Salts, and there had been a high tide that day. He was wet through to the skin ; for his poor eye-sight, you know, is but little use to him, and he had got into the wet ditches before he saw them. Oh ! it was a mercy he was not drowned ; for the Salts, you know, are very dangerous at times. And so tired he was, poor old man, and in such a taking about the tiresome donkeys, I thought he would go mad."

When William heard all this, no wonder that the small remains of his hardihood forsook him, and that he felt a sickly faintness creeping over him. "Oh," he thought, "suppose poor, blind Dick had really been drowned—I should have been a murderer, and never have been happy again !"

But Mrs. Watson's tale of misfortune was not yet ended. She went on to say, that her husband was very unwell all that night with pains in his limbs, and vexation about his strayed donkeys ; and that the next morning, to make matters worse, they heard that the animals had been found in a plantation of young trees,

where they had done a great deal of mischief, and that the owner of the trees would not give up the donkeys until the damage was paid for. "How they could get in that plantation, which is more than three miles away," said the poor woman, "is more than we can tell; for my husband met some young gentlemen, who told him that they saw his donkeys going down to the Salts, which is quite another road." But there they were, and poor blind Dick was obliged to go to see after his donkeys, and pay for the mischief they had done. Alas! it took all the money they had hoarded up to pay for half a year's rent. "And what with one thing and another," continued the old woman, "our money is all gone; and what is worse, my poor old man has been so ill ever since with pains in his head and limbs, and with trouble, that he has not been able to go out to sell anything, and we must sell the poor donkeys—and then what will become of us?" So saying, she burst into loud lamentations.

Boys are not naturally hard-hearted. Thoughtless they too often may be; but when distress is plainly seen before them, there are few who would not try to relieve it. A subscription was set on foot outside of the cottage door, and a noble pile of half-pence, and some silver, too, was soon seen on the poor woman's counter. Before they left, Mr. Weston, the usher, had also asked to see poor blind Dick, and was shown into his bedroom. He found him, indeed, very unwell, and needing better medical skill than the poor lame wife possessed: that, at least, was Mr. Weston's opinion.

But William—what did he think of his "good fun," his "capital trick," now? We shall see. We may as well say, however, that when his companions were

returning to the Crossway Oak, he slipped back to the cottage unperceived, and that though he was known to have had several shillings in his purse only a day or two before, he had not sixpence of it left when he reached school that afternoon.

Frank and Harry too, when they saw their school-fellows coming towards them, and read in their looks that something was amiss with poor blind Dick, we can answer for them, felt as they never wished to feel again. Their "good fun" had long before passed away; and now shame and dread pressed hard upon them.

Long and deep were the consultations which William, Harry, and Frank held with each other as they walked slowly homewards, and apart from their companions. There was one terrible consideration which distressed them beyond measure. It was bad enough, they felt, to have brought ruin upon poor blind Dick, or any one; but suppose he should die! They could see that there was only one proper course for them to pursue to atone for the evil they had done; and, happily, their fears prompted them to do what their consciences dictated:—as soon as they reached the school they sought their good, kind master, and made a full and open confession of their folly and sin.

We hold it to be a very good maxim not to speak of punishments out of school hours; and we therefore shall not proclaim what penance was enjoined on the three self-convicted and repenting boys. But it may readily be supposed that means were speedily taken to remedy the evils they had already brought on poor blind Dick, and to counteract that which was dreaded. On learning from Mr. Weston that the old man was really ill, the considerate schoolmaster instantly sent a doctor to him;

and it was no small relief to William and his fellow-transgressors to hear that no immediate danger was to be apprehended. A few days after, William received a letter from his father, to the following effect :—

“MY DEAR WILLIAM,—When you are at home, you are fond of hearing stories of my young days ; and now you are at school, I dare say you have not quite lost this fondness ; so I will tell you of an incident in my life, which occurred when I was a year or two older than you now are. Your grandfather’s house was, as you know, a large, old-fashioned place, and had the reputation of being haunted, which, however, was, of course, all nonsense. There was a back staircase which led from the kitchen to the upper part of the house, the top room of which, in that direction, was used as a lumber room. There was a window in this room which opened on to the leads, and a little further along was another window, which lighted the upper part of the great staircase, as it was called. Well, one dark, windy night, I went into the kitchen just as one of the servants was leaving it with something she had been told to take into the lumber-room. I plainly saw that she was unwilling to go, and that she was very fearful ; and a wicked thought came into my head, which I lost no time in executing. I ran from the kitchen to the hall, was soon at the top of the great staircase, out at the window, and in the dark lumber-room, before the timid girl was half up the back staircase. Presently, I heard her coming very slowly, and caught the glimmer of her light as she approached the last flight of stairs. I had chosen my time well, as I thought, and, putting my fingers to my mouth, gave a long shrill whistle. I heard a loud shriek in return, a heavy fall, the light disappeared, and then

all was still. In a moment my conscience reproved me, and my fears were excited. I ran down the stairs, stumbled over the poor senseless girl, who lay stretched in the passage, and soon returned with a light. But it was long, long before I could succeed in awaking my poor victim to her senses. In vain I shouted to her, 'Ann—Ann—don't be silly! It was I that whistled! There's nothing to be afraid of!' There she lay, to all appearance, dead. But oh! the misery I felt—to think that perhaps I had for ever driven away the senses of a fellow-creature! During those dreadful minutes I made a solemn vow, that if it would but please God to forgive my folly, and restore the poor girl to herself, I would never again be thus guilty. It seemed to me then that my vow was heard and accepted; for just as I was about, most unwillingly, to seek some other assistance, the poor girl recovered from her swoon, and burst into a violent flood of tears; and though she felt for some days very unwell, no other ill effects followed. So much for practical joking!

"You will easily, my dear William, perceive, by what I have written, that my excellent friend, Mr. Deacon, has informed me of *your* cruel joke upon an old and infirm man, and of its consequences, so far as they are at present known.

"By revealing to you my own youthful folly, I have willingly put it out of my power to say anything very harsh respecting yours. But I earnestly hope, my dear boy, that as this is probably the first, so may it be the last, of your practical jokes. Be assured that the comfort and happiness—to say nothing of the lives—of our fellow-creatures are far too serious things to make fun of. There is one thing, however, I must say. Your sin

was greatly aggravated by falsehood. This pains me deeply—that you, my William, should ever have been guilty of lying. That God may give you repentance and pardon for this awful crime is my earnest prayer. But seek this pardon yourself; and try to show by your future conduct that you have not indeed utterly forsaken the way of truth.

“As to poor blind Dick, as I find the object of your joke is called, I have written to Mr. Deacon, requesting him to continue his kind offices to promote his recovery, and to see that nothing is needed for his present comfort. We must not allow him to suffer in any way, so far as we can prevent it, by your folly. I shall expect from you that you will readily bear a part of the expense thus laid upon me; but we will speak of this when we see each other at Christmas. For the present, farewell.”

Poor blind Dick had a long illness, notwithstanding all the attention that was paid him: but, at length, to the inexpressible joy and gratitude of Frank, Harry, and William, the very day before they returned home for the holidays, they were able to shake hands with him in their playground, and ask his forgiveness for the danger and trouble they had given him. Even the two donkeys came in for a share of their caresses. The next half-year a new cart was subscribed for and presented to blind Dick; and for many years after that generation of schoolboys was scattered abroad in the world, the old man's cheerful voice was heard in the playground—“Come, boys, here's your nice golden pippins.” A lesson, however, had been taught, which was not soon forgotten by those boys—never to seek “good fun” without first thinking of its possible consequences.



V.

MANSFIELD ; OR, A GREAT VICTORY.

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**M**ANSFIELD, the young Cumbrian's friend, was a noble boy, though by no means faultless. Perhaps he did not, in every respect and at all times, seem amiable, for his manners were now and then rough, and his temper was occasionally uncertain. He was ardent; his ardour made him sometimes impetuous, and his impetuosity sometimes also, not generally, led him to disregard—no, not to disregard, but to lose sight for a moment of, the feelings of others, and drove him from the right line of propriety. Nevertheless, Mansfield was a noble fellow. He was, probably, guilty of more foolish actions, openly and undisguisedly, than many of his schoolfellows; but never was he known to be guilty of a mean one. His folly, such as it was, might plunge him into difficulties, but he never tried to get out of a difficulty by unworthy means.

In nothing did Mansfield's character more brightly and steadily shine than in his utter contempt of falsehood. "I have known him and watched him during the last seven years," said his master, after the boy had left the school, "and I never knew him, by word or action,

attempt to deceive me." Another fine trait in Mansfield's character was generosity ; that generosity which acknowledges and makes amends for a fault, protects the weaker from the oppression of the stronger, and gives up the wish or the will of self to gratify the wish or will of another. Mansfield never seemed to think or to act upon the thought, "I must take care of number one ;" but he did often take care of number two, three, four, or five, as the case might be.

A boy who dares always to speak the truth, to take the part of the oppressed, and to deny himself, must have a great deal of moral courage, and well deserves to be called noble. Do you not think so ?

Yes, yes, you cannot doubt it ; and you think—come, a penny for your thoughts, as you sometimes say to your schoolfellows—perhaps—

A penny ! Ah, you cannot sell them so cheap. Well, let us guess them.

You think that you yourself have in you some of the stuff of which heroes are made ; and that you, too, on any fitting occasion, could act very nobly in the way of speaking the truth fearlessly, enduring patiently, forgiving injuries generously, and protecting the injured bravely. Only such opportunities of distinguishing yourself do not often happen, and it is "a great bore" to be always looking out for them ; so that when they do present themselves, they slip by unawares, and leave you as they found you—much like all the rest of your schoolfellows.

Come now, be honest. Would you not like to be a young hero if you had the chance ? and do you not sometimes regret that you never had it in your power to do *some great thing* to prove your right to that title ?



Ah, young friend, you will never be a hero if you think after this manner. No one is a true hero, or truly noble, who seeks to be so just for the sake of distinguishing himself. Nor is it in great deeds only that true heroism is shown. No, no; there are every-day heroes who have never dreamed of being heroes at all; and among the most truly noble are some who had not the least idea of having ever done anything to deserve so honourable a title.

Do you not remember the words of our Lord, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me?" Those who do this in a right spirit are the true heroes, after all; and to them every day brings with it some fresh test of heroism.

Ay, it is in "the trivial round and common task" that boys, as well as men, are generally called upon to show true heroism; and unless they prove themselves noble in these little matters, when there is no fame nor praise to be got by it, they may never do it at all, since they may wait in vain for those *great occasions* of which they sometimes dream—even at mid-day.

We cannot tell how far our old schoolfellow, Mansfield, was influenced by a right spirit in all that he did amiably and lovelily. In after years, I think, he would look back with sorrow even on that part of his life which had appeared to those around him to be the least faulty, and feel that he had then, perhaps, been proud of his generosity, moral courage, and self-government, like the Pharisee, of whom we read that he thanked God he was not as other men. He would very likely remember that then he sought and valued the praise and good opinion of his parents and teachers and schoolfellows, and

thought much more of that than he did about pleasing God.

No, we cannot tell, for it is God alone who searches the heart. Mansfield had been trained by Christian parents to admire and to imitate Christian virtues ; he had had set before him Christian examples ; and so far had this been of service to him that he did not depart from the way in which it was right he should go—that is, in his outward conduct. And assuredly he had reason to bless God as long as he lived for the pains which had been taken with him while young, and for the prayers to God for him which had accompanied every precept and effort. In after years, by the powerful teaching of God's Holy Spirit, he came to see more and more clearly that no virtue of our own can make a sinner perfect and accepted before God ; but that the breach of a single law of the holy and just God requires a sacrifice for sin, such as none but He could provide, and such as He has provided in the death and righteousness of His dear Son. And then, if Mansfield had ever before relied on his own good deeds, he gladly and eagerly cast away such a false hope of mercy and eternal life, to lay hold of the hope set before us in the Gospel.

No, we cannot tell how it was, in this matter, with Mansfield when he was a boy ; nor perhaps could he, at that time, have told how it was with himself. There were motives, no doubt, of which he might not be entirely aware, which led him generally to do what was right and honourable. But it is likely that these were not the best, and highest, and holiest motives. There are some persons in the world, sometimes to be met with, who do much that seems right and good, but whose motives are far from being holy, and whose hearts

are really at enmity against God. Their pride rises against Him, and they turn away in scorn or dislike from His love and mercy as revealed to us in the Gospel: they will not yield themselves to His perfect law, and His gracious plan of salvation. This is a fearful state to be in, young reader; and let us warn you against the fatal error of believing that any lovely and amiable traits of character which may appear in you will serve you instead of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. If you had never sinned you might indeed be very bold. Then you would not need mercy. But you have sinned, and for sinners only one way of mercy is provided. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

While, therefore, to act justly and kindly, and honourably and nobly towards our fellow-creatures should ever be our earnest desire and endeavour—and while neglecting this we give sad proof of a depraved nature and an unchanged, unsanctified heart—it is nevertheless a fatal mistake to rest satisfied there.

Well then, young reader, we would have you to be heroic, and magnanimous, and noble; but we would have you to be so on good, firm, *Christian* principles, and from right *Christian* motives. Everything will be unsatisfactory without these principles and motives. It was so at this time with Mansfield.

"It is too bad; I say it is rank favouritism," said Mansfield, impetuously; "and I won't bear it. I don't care about losing my place in the class, but I do not like being served in this way."

"A bad mark for Mansfield," said the teacher, quietly, to the monitor who, that day, kept the mark book.

"A bad mark, sir! why am I to have a bad mark, Mr. Harpur?" asked Mansfield, with still increased impetuosity.

"For behaving improperly and speaking disrespectfully: now go to your desk."

The boy obeyed; but a flame of resentment was lighted up in his eye which was not immediately to subside. He fancied he had been unjustly treated.

Half an hour afterwards the head-master entered the schoolroom, and very quickly Mansfield was standing before him. His cheek was still burning hot with indignation.

"If you please, sir, I wish to speak to you, if you are not busy."

"By all means, Mansfield: what have you to say?"

"Mr. Harpur, sir, has treated me very unjustly," said the boy, almost passionately.

"Indeed! I am surprised to hear that," replied Mr. Deacon, gravely; "but from your present appearance and manner of address, I doubt whether you can properly judge of this matter. But let me hear your complaint."

"It was in the writing class, sir," said Mansfield, commencing his explanation, but in a more subdued and respectful tone; "and my copy was better written than most in the class; at least, sir," hesitating a little, "I am sure it was as well written as any; but Mr. Harpur had me put down all but at the bottom, sir—last but one."

"Well?"

"And when I complained of the injustice, sir, he gave me a bad mark."

"Well, Mansfield," the master repeated, drily, "anything more?"

"No, sir; only I am sure Mr. Harpur did it out of spite to me; and—and—" continued Mansfield, warming afresh, "he snatched the book away from me, as if—as if—like a dog, sir."

"Did Mr. Harpur take the book from you with his mouth, Mansfield?"

"No, sir, I did not mean that; but—but, sir, he did it very rudely."

"Mansfield," said Mr. Deacon, gravely, "I perceive you are in a very ill temper—an unusually ill temper for you, sir; and you are not at present capable either of thinking or speaking correctly. If you were in this mood in the class, I do not wonder that Mr. Harpur placed a bad mark against your name: I only wonder that you had not two. You may go now; I will speak to you again presently."

Mansfield went very disconsolately to his desk, and "presently" he was called up again.

"Now, Mansfield," said his tutor, "you are, I trust, a little cooler, and can speak rationally. Be so good as to re-state your grievance."

The boy did so.

"And what do you wish me to do?"

"If you would be so kind, sir, as to look at the copies, and see if I deserved to be put so low in the class."

"Most assuredly I shall not do this, sir," replied Mr. Deacon. "You ask me to insult a gentleman, after

having yourself insulted him by your ebullition of temper."

"It is wrong, sir, of Mr. Harpur to say that I insulted him."

"Mr. Harpur does not say so. I have not spoken to him on the subject. I judge by your own showing that you did so. If I had not confidence in Mr. Harpur, sir, or if I could think him capable of exercising the spite of which you have very improperly accused him, he would not be your teacher: but my confidence in that gentleman is not to be shaken by the petulance of a boy. As to your appeal to me to revise Mr. Harpur's decision, why, sir, if I were to submit myself thus to the direction of my pupils, and encourage them to set up their judgment against that of properly-qualified teachers, I should have enough to do. You forget your position, and that you should not presume to dictate to them in this manner.

"You have forgotten yourself strangely, Mansfield," continued Mr. Deacon, "and shown great disrespect to Mr. Harpur. Had any one told me, an hour ago, that you would have shown such bad temper, I should not have believed it; and when you have recovered your senses you will be ashamed of yourself. Go now to your work, and let me see no more of this spirit in you."

Mansfield withdrew; but he still thought himself ill used, and through all the morning he was sullen and disrespectful. Noon came, and a group of friends gathered around him.

"Yours *was* the best copy in the class, or one of the best," said one, "and it was spite in Mr. Harpur."

"It was a shame of Mr. Deacon to take Mr. Harpur's part as he did," said another.

"Never mind, Mansfield," said a third ; "I am glad you showed such spirit."

Mansfield said nothing ; but shaking off his comforters as soon as he could, he walked towards the further part of the spacious playground.

"Mansfield, you will play with us, won't you ?" was shouted from a party in the centre of the ground, who wanted one to make up the right number.

"I cannot just now," replied he, and he passed on.

"Mansfield, do help me with this horrid Cæsar," said another, in a doleful tone, from one of the benches, as he passed. "I have got fifty lines to translate before Saturday, and I am stuck fast : a stupid old freebooter, with his commentaries !"

"I am busy just now, William ; I'll help you this evening, if you want any help then."

"Oh, thank you, that will do : but, I say, I'll tell you how you may be even with old Harpur—and serve him right to."

"Oh, never mind about that ; I cannot wait now."

"Mansfield," cried a third, when he had advanced a little further, "I have got to write home to-day."

"Well, Harry, what then ?"

"Oh, you know how I hate letter-writing ; do come and give me a few notions—I know you will."

"Another time, another time ; come to me after school this afternoon, and we will talk it over."

"Mansfield—Mansfield : " everybody seemed to want Mansfield at that moment ; but at last he found himself alone.

Mansfield was in the habit, occasionally, of communing with his own heart ; and he did so now. Walking

to and fro, apart and out of sight, he struggled, wrestled, and gained a victory over himself—the noblest victory man or boy can obtain. Who shall say how painful was the conflict ?

The afternoon work had begun—the master at his desk, the teachers at theirs, the boys at theirs. Again and again Mansfield glanced his eye towards the former. Will he have courage to carry out his intention ?

“It must be done, and it shall be done.” the resolution was formed, and the next minute he was standing by his master.

“What do you say, Mansfield ?” asked Mr. Deacon, looking rather coldly at the boy.

“Sir,” said Mansfield, “I behaved very badly this morning, and I wish to ask your pardon, and Mr. Harpur’s.”

Well done, Mansfield ! noble Mansfield ! It cost him an effort, though ; and the tear in his eye, and the lip that trembled, in spite of his brave tone and brave words, told of it.

“I am glad to hear you say so, Mansfield,” said the master, looking pleased, and shaking hands cordially with the boy : “I was sure you would think better of it, though I could scarcely expect *this*, even from you. And I can answer for Mr. Harpur. Go to him, he wants to see you ; and he will explain why he placed you so low in the class this morning. He would have told you at the time had you not been so impetuous.”

“What a sneaking fellow !” said one of the boys afterwards ; “what a sneaking fellow, that Mansfield !—to go creeping up the governor’s sleeve in that way. I should be ashamed to curry favour so.”



"What a noodle!" said another; "what a noodle—that Mansfield! Would I have turned tail in that sort of way? I thought he had more spirit than to go confessing and begging pardon, and such stuff!—all his own doing, too. They will never catch *me* making such an ass of myself."

"What a noble fellow is that Mansfield!" said Mr. Harpur to Mr. Weston, on the same day: "there are few boys who would have submitted to such self-mortification as he has. He is a noble fellow."

"What a fuss about nothing!" says a modern schoolboy. "Call this a story? Would I have read it if I had known what it would be about! I call it 'much ado about nothing.' And Mansfield was noble, was he, because he was put out of temper, and afterwards confessed it, and begged pardon? Why, any boy could have done that."

Stop young friend. *Would* every boy have done it? Would you? Well, the next time you commit a fault, or are guilty of a folly—TRY.





## VI.

### THE BORROWED HALF-CROWN.

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**A**LBERT was at once the richest and the poorest boy in the school. That is, he was believed to have more money to spend than any three boys in the school besides; but, on the other hand, he had more fancied wants to be supplied than any six of them. The result was, that, like too many "boys of larger growth," he never could manage to live within his income.

Albert had two grandfathers, several uncles and aunts, and a good number of grown-up cousins, all within visiting distance of his father's house; and as these relations were in easy circumstances, and as Albert made a point of paying a farewell visit to each on the last day of the holidays, we need not be surprised that his purse was always well filled when he returned to school—so much so as sometimes to excite the envious feeling, "I wish I were as well off as you."

Albert was neither miserly to himself nor niggardly towards others: on the contrary, he was profuse. So long as his money lasted, he was liberal enough with

the dainties which it procured him; that is to say, when he had filled himself and was satisfied: and when called upon for a subscription for some expensive plaything, such as a cricket-ball, or the materials for a gigantic kite, he made a point—supposing his money had not previously disappeared—of giving sixpence, where every other boy contributed only threepence. There was nothing, however, very praiseworthy in this generosity. It too frequently happens, whether in boys or in men, that such conduct proceeds as much from selfishness as from any other motive; for love of applause is selfishness.

The true test of generosity is self-denial. If any person can willingly and cheerfully, and without ostentation, forego his own pleasures and indulgences, that others may be benefited, we hold him to be truly liberal; but not otherwise; and to this kind of liberality Albert could lay no claim.

Sam Brown was, in many respects, the reverse of his schoolfellow Albert. The occasions were very rare on which he was known to spend a penny. Those who knew least of him were inclined to pity him, believing that he had nothing to spend: but his more immediate companions were well aware that there was a money-box which he guarded with a jealous care; but how well filled it might be, they could not pretend to guess. All knew, however, that it was useless either to wheedle or to shame Sam Brown into any service that required the expenditure of his darling treasure; and he was accordingly looked upon, and justly, too, as a young miser.

There were times, notwithstanding, when this unamiable boy showed that he knew of *one* use to which

money could be put; he would lend it, where he thought he could safely do so, "for a consideration." True, there was a law in the school, entailing disgrace and punishment on both lenders and borrowers. But laws, even in a school, cannot always be so vigilantly guarded as to ensure entire obedience; and this law was often broken.

It happened on one occasion that, though scarcely a month had passed away since Albert returned to school with his purse well replenished, he was rather mournfully counting over its diminished contents. It was with difficulty that he could make himself believe that only three shillings and sixpence remained of all the stock he had brought with him; and many were the upbraidings which we may suppose he cast upon himself when he reflected on the way in which the bulk of it had been spent. There was Mrs. Watson's cake shop, so much; subscription for new cricket-bats and stumps, so much; apples, cherries, etc. etc., from blind Dick, so much; a pocket knife (the fourth he had bought that year), so much; and (of all things in the world) a *snuff-box*, so much. These were a few of the items which Albert cast up in his mind; and though he could not make the amount of his remembered spendings agree exactly with that of his deficiency, it was near enough to prove that the contents of his purse had not been taken away by any one besides himself.

Perhaps it may be thought that three shillings and sixpence might have served for spending-money through the remaining four months of the half-year. It certainly would have done for most schoolboys; but not for Albert. Setting aside the consideration that he

was, in general, a very spendthrift, he had just at this time decided, to his own satisfaction, that he *must* have a new flute. True, he had a flute; but, in his opinion, it was a very old one, having already lasted him two years: besides, it was a yellow one, and he could not bear yellow flutes. If he continued to learn music at all—of which, by the way, he was not very fond—he must have the nice ebony flute which was then to be sold at the broker's shop—a great bargain—only five shillings. But, alas! three and sixpence would not stretch to five shillings, let the bargain be ever so great. "I will try Sam Brown," thought he, suddenly recovering from his perplexity; and accordingly he ran in search of the boyish usurer.

"Perhaps I have, and perhaps I have not," said Sam, with all the cunning of an experienced money-lender, in reply to Albert's anxious inquiry whether he had a few shillings to spare.

"Oh—but I know you have!" continued Albert, in an insinuating tone. "Who ever knew *you* to be without money?"

"There is a rule in the school against lending and borrowing," replied Sam, very coolly, and pretending to walk away.

"Nonsense!" retorted Albert, catching his school-fellow's arm, and detaining him; "nobody need be the wiser. Come, now, will you lend me five shillings?"

"No!" replied the young usurer, bluntly. But we need not detail the long conversation which followed. After many a mortifying repulse, and much adroit higgling, the acute money-lender agreed to intrust half-a-crown to the needy borrower, on condition of its being repaid in a month, with an additional sixpence for the

accommodation. And thus the bargain was closed; and Albert ran off in triumph to secure his treasure of a flute.

Time seems to fly doubly fast to impoverished money-borrowers, whether old or young; and so Albert discovered to his sorrow. It was a most unwelcome surprise to him when he was one day beckoned by Sam Brown to a corner of the playground, and requested to pay back the half-crown, with the interest agreed upon. "Why, you lent it to me for a month!" exclaimed Albert.

"And that was a month ago, this very day," replied the inexorable Sam Brown, with an unmoved countenance; "I made a memorandum of it at the time; did not you?"

"Not I!" said Albert; "I had something else to think about."

"You ought to have done it," returned Sam, with great gravity; "but I dare say you have got the money all right, so it does not signify. See, here is the date in my pocket-book."

Albert mechanically took the pocket-book in his hand, and seemed to be looking at the entry which his creditor had made with so much coolness and method. But, in fact, his mind was very differently occupied. He knew well enough, and too well, that one solitary sixpence was the whole amount of his capital; and he was racking his brains for some way of escape from the importunity of his schoolfellow. So long did he hold the unlucky pocket-book in his hand, so attentively did he appear to peruse the two or three brief lines which marked the transaction, and so patiently, and yet so watchfully, did Sam Brown await the result, that we

may leave them for a minute while thus employed, and venture upon a short digression.

Poor Albert, like many other needy persons who are very anxious to borrow money, was by no means



SAM ASKS FOR THE HALF-CROWN BACK.

certain, when he did borrow it, that he should have the means of repaying it. Considering this—to say nothing of the strict rule against money-borrowing—it would have been only wise and honest in him to have resisted

the temptation, and denied himself the gratification on which he had set his mind. But this uncertainty did not, at the time, give him any uneasiness. He wanted the flute, and the flute he must have; so he trusted to a number of chances which *might* turn up, to enable him to repay the loan. Perhaps some of his friends would come to see him, as they sometimes did, and never without leaving a sterling memorial of the visit behind them. Perhaps a parcel from home might arrive before the month was expired; and perhaps, in that parcel, there would be a little packet of cash slipped into one corner, as had once occurred to him. Or, at all events, if neither of these things happened, he *could* write home, and ask for money to purchase the flute, and, no doubt, his request would be attended to. Enough: the coveted flute was secured; and for many days afterwards, nothing was to be heard from Albert but praises of his new purchase, and the noise he made with it, until the whole school looked upon the unfortunate instrument and its master as utter nuisances and disturbers of their quiet. But this did not last long: by the time the month had expired, the flute was thrown aside, and poor Albert had again and again called himself a blockhead for spending his money, his borrowed money, upon it. We need not say that neither of the chances occurred which the boy had too rashly calculated on; and now he found, to his great astonishment, that the term of his credit had expired. We return to the corner of the playground.

"Well?" was the first word uttered by Sam Brown, who grew tired of waiting and watching the countenance of his debtor. "Well? you can read, can you



not? Do you not find it all right?" he continued, speaking rather sharply.

"Oh yes, it is all right, I dare say: but, my good fellow, I really have not got the money yet."

Now, Sam Brown was not a very formidable-looking youth; and Albert had never before been afraid to look him, or any other boy, full in the face: but now his eyes were turned aside; he durst not encounter the angry glances of a disappointed creditor; and enraged he knew Sam would be. We shall, however, pass over the strife of words that followed poor Albert's confession of inability to pay. Another month's indulgence and quiet was at length purchased by the harassed young debtor, with his last remaining sixpence. "But take care you have the money ready then," was Sam Brown's parting admonition. "I will not be put off again in this way, I can tell you."

The boy debtor having thus dearly paid for a respite from the importunity of his creditor, determined to make a good use of it. He was too deeply mortified by the taunts and reproaches which had been cast on him to desire their repetition. He wrote, that same day, to his father, to request a fresh supply of spending money; and anxiously waited the result of his application. Several days passed, and no answer arrived; and when it did come, alas! and alas! it was a post letter, and not a neat little packet, such as he hoped would be sent to him by the carrier who once a week passed by his father's house. It was too plain that there was no money in the letter, and he dreaded to open it. At length he plucked up courage to open, to read, and to find his worst fears all but confirmed. His father, indeed, did not absolutely refuse Albert's request; but

he desired, first of all, to know what had become of all the money his son had taken with him to school, and for what particular urgency he required a fresh supply. This was a sad blow to Albert; nevertheless, there was no help for it, and he sat down to give the required account of himself, and his finances.

Albert's father was a business man, strictly honourable in all his dealings, and who, if he had any pride at all, was proud of the great accuracy with which he kept his own accounts. Albert knew this full well; and he knew, also, that he had more than once displeased his father by not following his directions in this particular. "Spend your money, if you please," had been said to him: "it was given you to spend; but take an account of every purchase you make, and show me that account when you come home. I shall know, then, how your money goes; and the habit of accuracy you will thus cultivate will be cheaply bought by a few pence, or even shillings, foolishly wasted." But, notwithstanding this somewhat indulgent method of viewing boyish extravagances, Albert had always given in just such meagre cash accounts as were to be expected from one who put off to the end of every six months what ought to have been done from day to day, or from week to week. On this occasion, it was very unwillingly that he set about what he considered a very unpleasant task. True, he could remember perfectly well how much money his purse contained at the beginning of the half year, how much of it was given to him by his father, how much by his mother, and how much was contributed by Aunt Rachel, Uncle John, Cousin Peter, and so on: the difficulty lay on the other side of the balance sheet.

Long did poor Albert labour to reduce to some kind

of commercial order and exactness, a strange jumble of items that bewildered his brain. Pears, apples, shoe-strings, gingerbread, snuff-box, bow and arrows, etc. etc., all seemed to be bustling for pre-eminence on his paper; and it was long before he could arrange them to his own satisfaction. At last he completed his list, so far as he could recollect what he had spent, and how he had spent it. But, alas! when he came to draw the balance, although he had added the now heartily hated flute to the number of his purchases, there required much more yet to account for his entire destitution. Besides this, he could not but see that so much gingerbread, fruit, and other delicacies made but a poor appearance on paper; in short, he was utterly ashamed of his cash account, and gave up the attempt, for that day, in despair.

But time pressed, and every time he met his young creditor, Albert dreaded a repetition of his angry looks and words. But this was no part of Sam's plan: he waited his time. The next day, however, found Albert at his heavy task; and, while sighing over it, a sudden temptation presented itself to his mind. "It will do; it must do," said he to himself. With trembling hands and flushed cheeks he commenced another letter, hurried through it, sealed, directed, posted it. The next hour he repented of what he had done; but to recall it was impossible, and to confess it—no, he would not, he *could* not. Dear young reader, this was not TRUE repentance.

The nature of Albert's sin will be learned from the following answer to his letter, which arrived a few days after:

"Son Albert,—I could not have thought that a boy

of mine would ever have been guilty of the deceit you have tried to put upon me. I have made inquiries among your relations, and have found you out in a string of falsehoods. Your Uncle Edward gave you five shillings ; your Uncle John gave you half-a-crown ; your Aunt Rachel gave you half-a-crown ; your grandfathers gave you half-a-crown each—and you have had the wickedness to tell me that your Uncle Edward's gift was only half-a-crown ; and you have put down the rest at shillings. I am distressed for you, Albert. You know that I have never cared—perhaps I have not cared enough—how you spend your money, so long as you keep a good account of your spendings. But it seems that you know well enough both how to squander money and to make up a false account. Go on as you have begun, and you will bring ruin on yourself and disgrace on your family. You need not expect that I shall furnish you with any more spending money this half-year. If you have none left, you must learn to do without. It will be useless for you to write to any of your relatives to help you ; for I have strictly charged them not to send you a farthing.”

Poor Albert ! when he received this severe letter, he was stupefied. How happy would he have been to be able to live over again the last few weeks of his life : but that could not be ; and nothing but disgrace, on all hands, seemed to await him. His sin had found him out. The effects of his trouble soon became visible. He got by himself, and cried until a sick headache came on ; a wretched, sleepless night followed ; and the next morning he was too unwell to rise and dress. And the worst of it was, he could not disclose the cause of his illness. It was many days before he recovered ; but he did

gradually get better, and was thought sufficiently well to enter the schoolroom again. It was on the very day that his month was out; and he really trembled when he caught the quick eye and knowing look of Sam Brown fixed upon him. Once in the course of that morning, too, Sam found an opportunity of whispering in the ear of his unfortunate debtor, "This is the day, you know." Poor Albert! why *would* you have dealings with a money-lender?

One way of deliverance, and only one, presented itself to Albert; he would try to sell his toys, books—anything, to raise the money for Sam Brown. Never, surely, did any itinerant merchant labour so hard in his calling, or so earnestly invite customers, as did Albert that day when play-hours arrived. But never did pedlar meet with worse success. In vain the bankrupt boy vaunted the strength of his bow, the superior quality of his arrows, the sharpness of his knives, and so on. One thing after another did he bring out to tempt a purchaser—flute and fiddle; school-book and story-book; it was all useless, although he offered every article at less than a quarter of its value. Those who were willing to buy had no money; and the few who had a little money, did not care to buy; so he gave up in despair.

Sam Brown had watched all these suspicious proceedings, although Albert had taken care not to invite him to purchase; and he now came forward to claim his debt.

"I have no money," said Albert, and the tears glistened in his eyes; "and my father will not send me any more this half; but——"

"You are a cheat, a great cheat!" exclaimed Sam

Brown, his eyes flashing with fury. "Yes, you *are* a cheat, and a thief; and I will go this minute and tell Mr. Deacon all about your tricks. I do not care for being punished for lending; but I am not going to be cheated out of my money."

"But you will not hear what I was going to say," replied Albert. "See, here is my flute, and my bow and arrows, and all the rest of these things; take what you like of them, and keep them till I can pay you. I am not a cheat; and you know I am not."

Sam's first thought was to refuse this offer—he did not want the flute, nor any other of Albert's second-hand things, not he. But second thoughts are best. He *did* care about the punishment he should receive as a lender, if the affair came to light; it was therefore to his interest not to make any public complaints. Besides, could he not make more than three shillings by accepting his schoolfellow's offer? So he put on the sullen air of one who has been very much injured, and will not forgive—"Well," he said, "I suppose it must be so then; but mind, you don't have any of these things till you have paid me my three shillings; oh! and another sixpence too, to pay for all this trouble;"—and saying this, he grasped, to Albert's dismay, the whole pile of goods which the poor boy had collected together—toys, books—all, all were swept off by the insatiable young usurer.

Very wretchedly did the two last months of that half-year pass with Albert. He heard no more from his father and had not courage to write, so that he had no pleasure in anticipating the holidays. He had no money to spend, and this to a boy who had so many fancied wants, and had the reputation of being so much richer

than all his schoolfellows, was a sad mortification. But he felt, perhaps, more than anything else, the daily and almost hourly taunts and sarcasms of Sam Brown, which he dared neither retort nor complain of. Added to all these vexations and troubles, the rapacity of his cruel young creditor had deprived him of almost all his valuables, and nothing that he could say would induce Sam Brown to relax his grasp upon them. Little did the kind-hearted schoolmaster, when he noticed the altered manners and wan countenance of the unhappy boy, and granted him one indulgence after another, that his health and spirits might be brought back—little did he guess at the real cause of the change.

At length the holidays came, and the holidays passed away; and Albert returned to school, gay and cheerful as ever. To his mother he had told the history of his dealings with Sam Brown, and its consequences; and she had made peace with his father, who hoped that the lesson would not be lost on his son. The parents were very angry at the meanness of the money-lender; and putting money again into their son's purse, told him to pay the young rascal—as the father called him; never to borrow money again, and above all things, to keep good accounts—and all would be well. Alas! in all the advice they gave, there was one thing entirely overlooked—Albert had been guilty of a great sin against God in attempting to deceive his father. He had shown that his heart was not right with God; and, above all things, it was needful for him to repent, to seek, through Jesus Christ, the pardon of all his sins, and to obtain the teaching and assistance of God's gracious and Holy Spirit in striving against the power

of new temptations. It was right for Albert's parents to admonish their son not to get into debt, and to keep good accounts; but he needed also to have his conscience awakened and alarmed by the solemn truth, that there was an account standing between his Maker and himself—that the time of reckoning was drawing nearer and nearer every day and every hour—and that dying, as he had hitherto lived, in unconcern and rebellion against God, he would find, by dreadful experience, that unrepented and unpardoned sin, as a heavy weight of debt, sinks the soul lower than the grave, and for ever shuts it out from happiness and heaven. It was proper that Albert should be warned against putting himself again in the power of one who had certainly been unkind and ungenerous towards him; but he should have been reminded of the lovely example and the holy precept of the Lord Jesus, who said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. v. 44). This might have checked his angry feeling against Sam Brown; and would thus have done more good, every way, than calling the money-lending boy, greedy though he was, in Albert's hearing, "a young rascal."

Albert, however, had no opportunity for showing either unlovely contempt or kind forgiveness towards his old persecutor, for Sam Brown did not return to school after the holidays. Thus he lost his pledges—flute, fiddle, and all; and could only console himself by retaining the dearly purchased money.

We believe that Albert never borrowed money again while he remained at school; perhaps he had no occasion to do so. Whether he obeyed the injunction



to keep good accounts, is a matter that rested between his father and himself. If he did, they must have been strange ones, for his squandering habits were not lost; nor did his bitter experience of the miseries of borrowing money produce any permanently good effects in his future life.

Without tracing Albert's history any further, let us earnestly request the young reader to learn a practical lesson or two from it.

1. Never borrow money, or get in debt. Schoolboys have neither occasion nor right to do either. There is a plain and simple direction in the Bible, which it would be well for every schoolboy to commit to memory, and always practise: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. xiii. 8).

2. Beware of covetousness, which is a great sin against God, and brings unhappiness to man. Sam Brown was a covetous boy; and he was neither happy himself, nor the cause of happiness in others. And "this we know, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God" (Eph. v. 5).

3. Learn to moderate your wishes, and not think it necessary to your happiness to have money to spend, or to be always spending it on luxuries. Even schoolboys may make a far better use of what little money they have than this. Contentment and self-denial cannot be too early learned and practised. "He that wasteth his father is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach;" and, "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (Prov. xix. 26, xxi. 17).

4. Above all things, let the young reader remember,

that though prudence and frugality are necessary to worldly success, and are also enjoined upon us in the Bible, they will never secure the possession of heavenly riches—never open the way of life to a sinner. *All* are, by nature, in a state of sin and condemnation; all have need of the salvation which the great Redeemer, in wonderful mercy and condescension, offers to those who believe in His name; and to all it is said, whether wise for this world, or foolish—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"(Luke xiii. 5).





## VII.

### TEMPTATION AND CONQUEST.



**M**ANSFIELD left school, passed through an apprenticeship, and at twenty-five years of age, or thereabouts, was the proprietor of a small business in the country town in which, at a later period of his life, we have spoken of him as a prosperous tradesman.\*

At this time, however, his circumstances were far from prosperous. He had embarked the very limited capital he could command in a business which sadly disappointed his hopes, though, happily, it did not damp his energies.

"Hope on, hope ever;" "Hope humbly, hope always;" "Never despair:" these are good mottoes in their way; and Mansfield tried to make the best of them. He would not despair; he would hope; but he could not keep his heart from aching, when, night after night, after returning from business, he retired to his bedroom, sadly pondering over his gloomy and uncertain prospects.

Mansfield's situation was all the more irksome from

\* See "The Young Cumbrian."

the fact of his being almost a stranger in the place. He had lived but a little while in the town, and had made but few acquaintances, to say nothing of friendships, which the reader may, perhaps, know are very different things. He had, therefore, no one to advise him, or to encourage him, excepting Rachel—dear Rachel.

Rachel was Mansfield's sister, the same who had helped him in his boyhood to learn the multiplication table, and who now, his housekeeper and only companion, helped him to persevere and struggle on. Sometimes, when poor Mansfield's spirits were most drooping, Rachel would persuade him to walk with her quite away into the fields, or by the river side. And then, forgetting his troubles for a little while, Mansfield would be induced to talk of the days of his childhood, or of old school times, and of other things besides, and returned refreshed and strengthened.

It was in itself no pleasant change for Rachel Mansfield to take up her abode in a close and somewhat dark dwelling, in a narrow, crowded street, in a town where she and her brother were so little known, instead of living in the country, and being surrounded by old and loving friends. But had it been still more irksome to her, she would willingly have borne it for her brother's sake, and to be useful to him. Ah! these kind and self-denying sister Rachels are great blessings in the world.

Mansfield was grateful to his sister; and his gratitude was shown in many little matters which some young men would never have thought of. Sometimes, too, when hope was at its highest, after a particularly encouraging day of business, perhaps, he would lay

many a plan for rewarding, in future days, the care and goodness of his sister Rachel.

There was something else, however, which, in addition to these alleviations, and more than anything besides, enabled Mansfield to keep up a good degree of courage amidst all his discouragements: he loved the Bible, and he loved prayer. He had the true recipe for cheerfulness—he was a Christian. Some years before he knew much about the cares of business, Mansfield had been dissatisfied with himself, with his pleasures, and with all the world. And yet, some might have said, he had much with which he might have been satisfied. The approbation of the wise, the love of the good, cheerful companions, industrious and persevering habits, health and moderation, a business training which suited his inclination—all these, with many other helps to happiness, were his. But still he was dissatisfied. One thing more was wanting; and that one thing was “the love of God shed abroad in his heart.” For a time, he neglected the invitations of God’s Word, and the gentle but powerful strivings of the Holy Spirit, and his uneasiness increased. But at length, by the grace and mercy of God, he was enabled to yield, and he gave his heart, his affections to Christ; took Christ’s “yoke” upon him, and learned of Him: then his inquietude vanished. From that time, Mansfield had known much, and enjoyed much, of the spirit of that most faithful declaration, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee”(Isa. xxvi. 3).

Not that Mansfield expected, because he was a Christian, to pass through life without trouble of some kind or other; he knew better than this: but he did

expect, he trusted, he believed, that even trials would be sanctified and made blessings; and he rested upon the promise of God, who says of every child of His, "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Ps. xci. 14, 15). It was this trust in God which gave courage to Mansfield, as it has done to thousands besides, to face his difficulties cheerfully, and without murmuring. And to you, readers—schoolboys as you are now, but men as you will be soon, should your lives be spared, and men struggling, perhaps, with life's difficulties—to you do we say, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him" (Ps. xxxiv. 8).

At a time when Mansfield's difficulties in business seemed to gather fast, and when his hopes were at the lowest, an event occurred which promised to change the current of affairs. An old lady, his relation, to whom Mansfield was what is called *heir-at-law*, died suddenly, and no will could be found. Now Mrs. Simmons—Cousin Jane, as she was familiarly called—was a strange-tempered old lady; and, having taken offence at something said or done by her relations, she had rejected all further communication with them, and declared that none of the Mansfields should ever inherit any part of her property. At the same time it was known that she did cause a will to be made which was duly signed, and by which her whole property was left to a stranger who had recently made her acquaintance, and had, as was believed, persuaded her to this unkind and wrong course, and kept up in her mind those bitter feelings.

Nevertheless, when Cousin Jane died, greatly to the surprise of all concerned, no will could be found; and after many a strict and persevering but vain search, from cellar to garret, of the large old farm house in which she had lived, it was concluded that, in a moment of repentance, the old maiden lady had destroyed the unjust will, with the intention perhaps of making another, which intention she had not found time or opportunity to fulfil.

Very much enraged was Mr. Thomson, the expectant legatee, at this disappointment of his hopes: but there was no help for it; and, as Mansfield was really the best entitled to the inheritance, he very properly and righteously entered into its possession.

It was, doubtless, a great relief to Mansfield's mind, whatever degree of regret he felt at the death of his relation, to find himself thus unexpectedly released from the cares and anxieties of an unsuccessful business. But he did not act ungenerously towards the disappointed expectant; or rather, he behaved very generously; for it was to be considered that Mr. Thomson had no natural claim to the property of "Cousin Jane."

Not to puzzle the reader with a long explanation of the distinction which is made in law between what is called *real* property and *personal* property, we need only say that all of the former description, of which there was much, belonged to Mansfield, as heir-at-law; and that all of the latter, of which there was little, had to be shared between himself and his sister Rachel. This was accordingly done; and after some needful delay, and when all legal forms had been observed, the brother and sister took possession of what they and

everybody else believed to be righteously and lawfully their own.

A few months afterwards, Mansfield's circumstances were greatly improved. He had removed from his former house into larger and more desirable business premises in another part of the town; his business was greatly increased, so that he had no longer any temptation to fret at the absence of customers. Rachel remained with him as housekeeper; but a new prospect had opened to them both—they each looked forward to marriage.

Mansfield's accession to property, and the change in his position, had introduced him to new connections: he could no longer regret being unknown and unaccompanied—wealth has many friends.

As to his recently-acquired inheritance, as Mansfield had wisely determined not to relinquish a business to which he had been brought up, he had arranged to let the farms, and was on the point of doing so, having previously sold by auction much of the stock and furniture which had descended jointly to himself and his sister. Thus far then all was smiling; the sunshine of prosperity was full upon him.

One evening, a countryman entered Mansfield's shop, and saying that he wanted a word in private, was ushered into the counting-house.

"Well, my friend," said Mansfield, "what may be your business?"

The man took from his pocket a small parcel, and laid it down. "You don't know me, I dare say," said he; "but that is no matter. I bought some things at old Madam Simmons's sale."



"Yes, I think I remember you now. I hope you were satisfied with your bargain."

"Oh yes; as to that, I need not complain. I bought a bed and bedstead, and a lot of crockery, and some chairs, and so on; and an old—I don't know justly what to call it; it was a set of drawers, like—very old-fashioned and tumble-to-pieces."

"Yes, I recollect: it was a cabinet."

"Ay, that's what it was called on the bill. Well, sir, the long and short of it is, when we were getting the things home, this cabinet got a smash, and was knocked pretty near all to bits; and in putting it together again, *this* dropped out. Where it came from I can't say; for I could have been positive there was nought in the drawers when I bought the bit of goods. However, here it is; and as it was no part of my bargain, and did not concern me, I thought I might as well bring it up here." So saying, the man pushed the packet towards Mansfield.

Mansfield opened it—glanced at it: it was the WILL.

With what feelings the young tradesman discovered the nature of this communication it is not necessary to surmise: our business is not with what he *felt*, but with what he *did*.

"Do you know what this paper is?" he asked of the man, as calmly as he was able.

"No, sir: to tell the truth, I am not much of a scholar, and can't read writing at all; and then I thought it was no business of mine, so I did not look into it."

"And have you shown it to any one else?"

"Certainly not, sir. Nobody has seen it."

"You, probably, however, guess what it contains?"

"I may have my own thoughts about it," said the man ; " but that's neither here nor there. If the paper, whatever it is, is of any use to you, you are welcome to it: if you like to pay me for my trouble of bringing it,



"DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS PAPER IS?"

well and good ; and if it is of no use, why you can put it in the fire at once, and there will be an end of it."

"I will get you to wait a little while, my friend," said Mansfield, still calmly: "this is a matter which

cannot be disposed of by us two." Thus saying, he wrote two hasty notes, dispatched them, and then invited the countryman into his parlour. In a few minutes a neighbour, with Mansfield's sister and his solicitor, were added to the conference.

In a few days it was rumoured, and the rumour soon became a certainty, that Mansfield had lost the inheritance to which he had succeeded, and that he was a ruined man. And—

"Did you ever hear of such a piece of Quixotism?" asked one townsman of another, during the prevalence of the "nine days' wonder." "Why, as I have been told, Mansfield no sooner set his eyes on the will—which, by the way, he might have destroyed if he had pleased, and nobody would have been the wiser—than he called in his lawyer, and they together sent off, post haste, to old Thomson, to let him know all about it. At any rate, I would have taken care of myself, and made a good bargain of it, before giving up the will. And as to that, there would not have been much harm, in my way of thinking, if the will had gone into the fire. Who has the best right to the property, I should like to know? But Mansfield is one of the queer ones, they say; and so is his sister: and if people will be fools, they must."

Many such speeches were spoken, and some blamed, some laughed, some sighed, and some praised. Meanwhile, quietly and peacefully, though it may be with some natural depression of spirits, Mansfield and his sister went on their course. They gave up, at once, their late possessions according to the tenor of "Cousin Jane's" will; and were ungenerously harassed by the new owner on account of that part of it which had been sold, or otherwise expended. As far as they were

able, they met his demands : but not satisfied with this, he threatened them with law. Then came the breaking up of Mansfield's business, and the utter frustration of his hopes of conjugal happiness. He had to begin the world afresh, "and that with nothing—no, not a penny of his own:" so said his neighbours; but this was a mistake.

*Not with nothing!* He had great riches—peace of mind, a conscience void of offence, God's love and approbation: are these nothing, young reader?

And he prospered. Worldly prosperity often brings a load of trouble with it: but it brought none to Mansfield, for it was accompanied by that "blessing which maketh rich," and to which God "addeth no sorrow" (Prov. x. 22).

Young friend, if you would have God's blessing, you too must be prepared to hold fast integrity and a good conscience at all cost. Probably, indeed, you will never be exposed to a trial so severe as that of which you have just read; but you will not pass through life, depend upon it, without having your honest and honourable principles put to the test. How do you think you will be able to stand it?

Ah, perhaps you say, it will be time enough to find out that when the time comes.

Well, time enough to find it out, may be, but not time enough to prepare for the trial. No, no; you must prepare for that *now*. If you are not heroic and courageous enough now to do what is right because it is right, what can be expected of you when the stern and hard trials and temptations of life come on? Why, this is to be expected—you will fall before them.

Christian principle!—that is the best and only true safeguard against every kind of temptation; the only armour that is *proof*. “Take unto you,” then, young readers, “the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Do you ask what this armour is? Why, there are the breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith, the girdle of truth, and the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and prayer, and watchfulness, and peace (Eph. vi. 11–18). This is the armour in which, by the help of God’s Holy Spirit, you will be “able to stand against the wiles of the devil,” and the strong temptations which may assail you.

We do not know what our old schoolfellow Mansfield would have done without this armour; but we do know that “life abounds with circumstances calculated to manifest what are the real principles of most persons; and wherever there is a desire of glorifying God, the transactions of every day will yield opportunity for doing so; as they will also afford means for serving” self and the world.

Christian principle!—but how to get Christian principle? Is that your question, young friend? Listen, then, to Him who says, and says to you, “Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. Learn of ME.”

Yes, learn of Jesus, and then one simple and all-sufficient reason will urge you on, and strengthen you for a continuance in well-doing, and brace you in every unexpected emergency:—I cannot do this wrong; I must not do this wrong; by God’s help, I will not do this wrong; for I “serve the Lord Christ.”



## VIII.

### THE GENERAL ILLUMINATION.

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**A**N illumination and a holiday—an illumination in the town, and a holiday at school! Cause and effect; the effect, however, preceding the cause: there was a holiday at school in the day, because there was to be a grand illumination in the town at night. Why there was to be an illumination is but of little consequence; it might have been on occasion of a political triumph, or a coronation, or some other public event.

A long walk after breakfast; then, after dinner, marbles in the playground, for marbles were *in*. Of all the marble players of that day, Robinson was the best shot. He could single out a marble from the ring, or strike, with unerring aim, the taw of an opponent at a distance of three paces; and at six he rarely missed. On that particular afternoon, his skill shone more conspicuously than ever, and he was proportionately elated.

Superior ability, however, whether in the games of schoolboys or the more important pursuits of manhood, has its disadvantages; and Robinson's opponents dropped off, one by one, tired of being perpetually

beaten. "It is of no use to play with *him*," said they; "there is no chance of winning a single game." At length, he was left alone in his glory.

Robinson was modest. He disclaimed all personal excellence, and depreciated his own skilful performances. It was not that he could shoot with a marble better than any other boy; this was not the cause of his winning every game, he said: but he had the happiness of possessing a most valuable "blood alley;" and all the merit was in his alley, and not in himself. It was a perfect sphere, this same alley, he said, and therefore it went so straight to the mark; it was also the exact size which suited his knuckle: according to his account of it, this alley almost seemed to be endowed with consciousness, and to act in concert with the mind and will of its owner. Besides all this, it was a perfect beauty, quite a *love* of a marble, so regularly veined, and so delicately tinted. It was a real blood, too.

"How much will you take for your alley?" was asked once and again by one and another, who half believed in its vaunted and peculiar virtues.

How much! Scores of common everyday alleys would not, that afternoon, have purchased Robinson's "little fairy," as he called it.

Thus much for the holiday; now for the illumination.

It was a fine evening, and hundreds were thronging the streets, to see what was to be seen. Before the sun had set, each householder was busy in preparing the lamps or candles with which his dwelling, outside or in, was to be enlightened and enlivened. Presently, as the dusk of evening increased, lights were rapidly applied to turpentine wicks, until soon every street

sparkled, from end to end, with brilliancy. On one house shone a magnificent pure white star; on another, a crown of many-coloured lamps. Here were gigantic initial letters of flame, shining through purple and gold; and there a wonderful transparency, emblematic of the event which had given rise to the general rejoicing. Some householders had contented themselves with decorating their window sills, externally, with tallow candles in candlesticks of clay, which flared and flamed and wasted (the candles, not the candlesticks) in the evening breeze. Others, more prudent and economical, illuminated their windows within-side.

It was a profitable evening, that, for oil merchants and tallow chandlers: even the poor bedridden stocking-knitter, who could scarcely earn enough money to buy daily bread; the mechanic out of work; the widow washerwoman, with a large young family to support—these, and dozens besides, while sorely grudging the waste, added, by their rows of lighted candles, to the splendour of that general illumination.

The excited schoolboys, however, who, accompanied by one of their teachers, lest they should get into mischief, increased the throng of street-gazers that night, had little thought for such matters, and found enough to admire in every bright and shining device that met their eyes. Stars and garters, crowns and sceptres, transparencies, oil lamps, and tallow candles, all seemed wonderfully fine and grand to boys who had never until then witnessed a general illumination.

Presently, turning the corner of a street, our schoolboys found themselves in a thicker crowd, facing a large house which was not lighted up. Very gloomy and frowning seemed that mansion amidst its gay and



brilliant neighbours; and very wroth was the crowd with the owner of that house for the strange perverseness he showed.

"He deserves to have his windows broken," said one.

"So he will," replied another, "before the night is out."

"A stingy fellow!" exclaimed a third.

"He is not stingy; he belongs to the opposition," said a fourth.

"More shame to him!" shouted a fifth; "he *ought* to have his windows broken."

And probably, ere this, the gentleman's windows would have been broken, had not the people in the crowd known that constables were placed by the magistrates in front of the house, ready to pounce upon the first who should throw a stone.

"Pass on, boys, as quickly as you can," said Mr. Weston, the teacher; "and let us get out of the crowd as soon as we can;" and accordingly the boys passed on.

"Why is not that house illuminated, sir?" asked one of the boys of his teacher.

"I believe, for one thing," replied Mr. Weston, "the gentleman who lives in it thinks that a general illumination is a very foolish waste of money, and therefore he sets his face against this evening's public rejoicings; and I think his opinion is correct. Then, for another thing, you heard one of the men say that Mr. Martin—for that is the gentleman's name—belongs to the opposition: that is, he thinks differently from those who have ordered the general illumination, and does not consider that there is any cause for rejoicing of any kind;

and therefore, also, he chooses not to light up his house."

This explanation did not entirely satisfy some of our schoolboys. "A pretty fellow, this Mr. Martin," thought they, "to set up his judgment against all the world. So he would not have had an illumination, eh? And then we should have lost this grand sight, and our holiday into the bargain.

"He *does* deserve to have his windows broken, I think," said one.

"I should just like to have a shy at them," whispered another.

"We must go back that way again," said a third, significantly: and so, for that time, the subject was dropped.

A larger crowd than before was assembled in front of Mr. Martin's house, when the boys, returning from sight-seeing, were going schoolwards: and it was by no means a quiet crowd. Some were shouting, some hissing, some were abusing the constables who kept watch and ward.

"Keep on the pavement, and go on as fast as you can," said Mr. Weston.

But they could not go fast, had they wished, and the boys did not particularly wish to go fast; it was good fun: and when they were just opposite the dark house, they stood still for more than a minute, waiting for a clearer passage.

There was one boy in that group who, had he been noticed, would have been seen to slip his hand into his pocket, draw it out again—put it in again—draw it out again, and then look stealthily round with a very red face. At length, had he been very closely watched, a

small marble would have been seen between his finger and thumb, held very tight, and nervously worked to and fro.

"Now, then, my boys," said Mr. Weston, "there is room for you to pass: be quick."

The next minute a sharp sound of broken glass was heard; and the marble had disappeared.

"Hallo! there goes one window to begin with," exclaimed a voice from the crowd.

"Who did that?" shouted one of the constables, rushing forward; "it was one of those boys, I know;" and he was about to lay hands on one of them at a venture.

"Nonsense, my good man," said Mr. Weston; "I have been close by them all the time, and not one of them lifted a hand, I am certain."

"Well, Mr. Weston," replied the man, who knew the teacher, "I believe you; else I did fancy the stone came from hereabouts. This is a queer sort of job, sir; I wish it was over," and he returned to his station, just in time to hear the crash of another pane of glass, and to lay hands on the man by whom the stone was thrown. Then there was a rush, a rescue, and a fierce fight between constables and mob, ending in more broken windows, some broken heads, and the committal, next morning, of three or four rioters to prison. Meanwhile, the boys reached home, pleased with the fun, and only regretting that general illuminations were so rare.

On the morning of the next day, the boys being seated, and busily at work at their desks—the master, accompanied by a visitor, entered the schoolroom, and looked gravely around him.

The visitor was a stout, pleasant-looking man, very plainly but neatly dressed.

"Who is he? Who is he?" was whispered by one to another.

There were few who knew him: but presently, at the further desk was heard a low-toned voice, "That is Mr. Martin;" and at the sound of this name, one of the boys, our sharp-shooter, Robinson, looked rather confused, fidgeted in his seat, and then hastily began to work away most industriously at the slate before him.

"What can he be come for?" whispered a boy at Robinson's elbow—"eh, Robinson?"

"How should I know?" replied he. "What is it to you? Why don't you go on with your work? You will get me a bad mark presently for talking, if you don't mind." And again he went on with his sum.

"Boys," said Mr. Deacon, after a few minutes' ominous silence, "I wish you to form a general class."

It was done.

"Boys," said he again, "my friend Mr. Martin had some of his windows broken last night; and I am sorry to say there is grave suspicion resting on one or more of you as having joined in this wanton mischief. What am I to say to this? What have you to say to it?"

No answer, but many broad stares at Mr. Martin, who stood by the master's side, with a good-humoured expression of countenance, which spoke volumes of encouragement.

"Mr. Weston tells me," continued the master, "that you were in front of this gentleman's house when a window was broken, and that one of the constables charged one of you with the deed."

"Yes, sir," one of the accused ventured to reply; "but Mr. Weston knew that we did not do it."

"Nay, he only thought you were guiltless, as he had not seen either of you throw a stone: but he might be mistaken, you know."

"Yes, sir, he might; but——"

"Well, will any one of you acknowledge having thrown a stone, so as to break one of the windows in Mr. Martin's house?"

No answer.

"I must ask all round, then. Did you? Did you?—you?—you?—you?"

"No, sir"—"Oh no, sir"—"Certainly not, sir"—"I did not, indeed, sir." Thus said they all.

"Will you ask our young friends if either of them threw a *marble*?" said the gentleman.

"Certainly I will. You hear, boys, what my friend suggests—was a marble thrown by either of you, so as to break one of the windows?"

At mention of the word marble one of the "young friends" hung his head and seemed embarrassed; but he soon recovered himself. As before, there was no answer.

"Come, I entreat you to speak, if any one of you is conscious of having done it," said the master kindly: "it is as bad to conceal some faults as to commit them. 'Dare to be true.' Mansfield, did *you* throw a marble through this gentleman's window? Alfred, did you?—William?—Henry?—Albert?—Frank?"

"No, sir: indeed, sir, we know nothing about it."

"Bowler?—Nelson?—Hart?—Powel?—Robinson?"

"No, sir," said they all once more.

"They all deny it, sir," said the master, turning to the visitor.

"I am sorry for it," replied Mr. Martin, looking grave and sad; "for by the testimony of a credible witness whom I have this morning seen, and whom I will produce, if necessary, one of these boys is guilty. In the meantime," he continued, slowly putting his hand into his pocket, "this may assist us in discovering the culprit, as it is so peculiarly marked. It was found this morning on my parlour carpet, having dropped there when the inside shutters were opened, and one of the panes of glass has a hole which answers exactly to its size." Thus saying, Mr. Martin exhibited, in the broad palm of his hand, a marble.

Very startling was the effect produced by this exhibition.

"It is Robinson's alley—his shooter, his blood alley," whispered the boys from top to bottom of the class. As to Robinson, he instinctively put his hand into his pocket, and drew out, tremblingly, a handful of marbles. His alley was not there. He coloured; then his colour went! then tears gushed from his eyes.

"Is it yours? or, was it yours?" asked the master, sternly.

"Yes, sir." Yes, Robinson did not deny it; nor could he deny that he played with it, and won with it, the day before, and that he refused to sell or barter it away. It was in his pocket—that was clear—when the boys started on their evening excursion.

In truth, and in short, Robinson was guilty. The temptation to mischief had been too strong to be resisted—that is, he had not resisted it. The fun of silyly breaking a window, joined with the idea that it would be a just punishment for the man who would not illuminate, had reached to his fingers' ends; and in

the excitement of his mischievous propensity, he had forgotten all about his "little fairy," and had sent it on the evil mission, believing it to be a marble of common stone or clay.

Poor Robinson—foolish Robinson—truthless Robinson! How he trembled, and stammered, and coloured, and became pale and coloured again, when the mischief and the guilt were brought home to him.

"But, sir, sir—oh, sir, it was not a lie—it was not indeed, sir, if you will but think, sir. I said, sir—I said I did not *throw* the marble, and indeed I did not, sir."

"No? How then?"

"I—I *shot it off*, sir."

"It is a mean, disgraceful, and sinful equivocation, boy!" said the master, angrily; "an equivocation of which I could have hoped not one of my pupils would have been guilty."

Robinson hung his head.

"You may well be ashamed of yourself, sir," continued the tutor; "and——"

"Allow me to interpose," said the good-humoured gentleman; "for perhaps I am in fault. I should have shown the marble at once, and then the temptation would not have been placed before this lad. The window-breaking I forgive with all my heart; though I hope our young friends will not henceforth think it necessary or expedient to break the windows of all who do not act precisely according to their own views of what may be right and proper. Were we all to do so," continued the friendly visitor, with a smile, "there would not be many sound panes of glass in Great Britain, I fear. Well, that is settled, and we will shake

hands over the broken window ;” and Mr. Martin held out his hand to the culprit, who, timidly, and with averted face, responded to the invitation.

“But the falsehood, young friend, the falsehood—for



“WE WILL SHAKE HANDS.”

a falsehood it was—do you not feel it to have been such? that is another matter. I may forgive you, and take blame to myself for leading you into temptation; but you have grievously offended your best Friend. He has given you a tongue, but not for double-dealing;



thought and wit, but not to contrive how your neighbour may be outwitted in the strife of words. Do you not think so?"

The boy made no reply; and the gentleman, still holding his reluctant hand, went on:

"There are men as well as boys who fancy it clever to use the letter of truth in the spirit of falsehood; but as the Lord looketh not at the outward appearance, but at the heart, so also doth He look at the intention to deceive or mislead, and not at the words which convey the deception.

"I will not tire you by further speech," said the kind-hearted man, "except to commend to you, and all your schoolfellows, the words of honest George Herbert:

‘Lie not, but let thy heart be true to God,

Thy mouth to it; thy actions to them both:

Cowards tell lies, and those that fear the rod;

The stormy working soul spits lies and froth.

—Dare to be true. Nothing can need a lie:

A fault which needs it most, grows two thereby.’

"And now, my friend," said the visitor, turning to the master, "I have somewhat usurped your magisterial authority, but I know you will pardon me, and I would fain be an advocate with you for this lad. I think he is sorry that he injured me; and I have freely forgiven him; I trust you will forgive him also. And will you also forbear to punish this time, the remissness in truth of which you may justly complain? The temptation was doubtless strong; and strong men, you know, have ere now fallen in like manner. I hope—nay, I will believe, he will be henceforth more guarded, and remember that equivocation is deceit, and that deceit is hateful to the God of truth. I think I see penitence in his eye: will you forgive him?"

The appeal was successful, punishment was remitted: and, after a kind farewell to the pupils, Mr. Martin was about to leave the schoolroom, when, darting from his seat, a little fellow ran up to him—

“Sir, sir, may I shake hands with you?” and in another minute the whole school had followed his example.

Had there been a general illumination on the succeeding evening, not a schoolboy there but would have been proud to guard the house of their friend from injury.

And now, young reader, take a lesson and a warning. Schoolboys are apt to do mischievous things foolishly and thoughtlessly, but sometimes wickedly. There is one rule which, if well regarded, would keep them from this—the golden rule of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

But having foolishly, or thoughtlessly, or wickedly perpetrated mischief, or having, by any means, got into what you call a “scrape,” take care that you are not tempted to make the matter worse by equivocation. The Word of God is plain on this point. God abhors deceit; and His plain and awful, but just and righteous declaration is, that into heaven shall never enter “any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or *maketh a lie*.” Lay these words to heart, young friend. “Value your honour, truthfulness, and integrity. Detest everything like duplicity and deceit. *Don't go within a mile of a lie.*”



## IX.

### THE WRITING PRIZE.

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**J**AMES and Robert were very great friends. They were of nearly the same age ; they went to the same school ; they were both very good scholars for their years ; which was the better of the two even their master found it hard to say. "If there is any difference," he said, "it is this—James is a little more attentive than Robert ; and Robert is rather quicker in learning than James."

About a month before the school broke up for the holidays, Mr. Deacon, the master, brought into the dining-room a parcel, which he opened on the table round which his scholars were sitting, looking over their lessons for the next day. Among other things, this parcel contained a very pretty little writing-desk. It was made of rose-wood ; the corners of it were secured by brass ornaments ; and there was a plate of brass let into the wood just in the middle of the top of the desk. What this plate was for, we shall have to tell by-and-by.

The little desk was nicely polished, and the brass

work on it made it look very pretty indeed ; and the boys, no doubt, took off their eyes from their books, to fix them upon the desk.

Mr. Deacon next took a key from his pocket, and unlocked the desk : and then the boys saw that it was lined with red leather, and had a great many contrivances, so as to make it as complete and useful for its purpose as so small a writing-desk could well be. There was a case for writing-paper within ; and the lid, when opened, formed a sloping board for writing upon. There was a space parted off for pens, and another for sealing-wax, another for an ink-glass, and another for a sand-glass. There was a little place also for a pen-knife, and another for a paper-knife, and another for a small round ruler. Nor were any of these places empty. The paper-case was filled with writing-paper ; and pens, sealing-wax, pen-knife, paper-knife, and ruler, were all in their proper places, as well as many other things which we need not mention. The boys saw at once that the desk was a new one ; and they guessed—at least some of them did—why the master had opened it before them. Indeed, one of them said to another in a whisper, “ That is one of the prizes.”

The little fellow was right. It was the writing prize ; and Mr. Deacon explained to his scholars the way in which he wished them to compete for it.

He told them that all who desired to do so were to give him their names on a piece of paper, and that he, in return, would furnish each of them with a large sheet of drawing-paper and a Scripture text ; and that at the end of the month, he should expect to see the sentence written on the paper in any variety of hands

which the writers should choose — such as Italian hand, German text, Old English, Roman capitals, and good bold round text; and that the boy whose piece was the best written, provided it had no blunders or blots, should receive the prize. That same evening, six of the scholars, who were reckoned the best writers in the school, gave in their names to Mr. Deacon, and received from him the paper and the text of Scripture as he had promised. Among these scholars were the two friends, James and Robert. I may as well say also that the pieces were to be written out of school hours, and that Mr. Deacon strictly forbade any of the boys to give or receive help in writing them.

From this time forward, for a whole week, nothing was heard in the schoolroom, between and after school hours, besides the busy scratching noise of pens on paper, or the sound of india-rubber taking out pencil marks—for Mr. Deacon had given orders that the six boys who were writing their prize pieces should not be disturbed by their schoolfellows; and the writers themselves were too busy to speak to each other, except now and then to ask a question and receive an answer in a low whisper.

But at the beginning of the second week, the number of young writers was reduced to four. One of them became tired of keeping so closely to his desk; he wanted to get into the play-ground with his schoolfellows; so he gave up his piece, and the hope of gaining the prize. Another, after he had taken great pains with his writing, and when he had got through more than a quarter of his work, made a sad blunder in spelling, which he did not find out until it was too late to alter it. This vexed him so much that he tore

up his sheet of paper in anger, and would not ask his master for another that he might begin again.

At length the beginning of the fourth week came ; and by this time it was clearly seen that the struggle for the prize would be between James and Robert ; for though the other two boys had not given up their writing, and had nearly finished their pieces, they could easily see that theirs were not nearly so well written as those of the two friends. But which was the better written piece, James's or Robert's, not one of the boy's could venture to decide.

All this time the contest had been carried on in great good humour. But now a little change took place, which shows how very hard it is to keep bad feelings and tempers from rising in the heart ; and, how easy it is for what is kindly meant by one person, to give offence to another.

As the time drew near when the pieces should be ready to show to the master, Robert became very snappish, and, indeed, very cross, to everybody who came near him, except to his friend James ; and even *he* did not quite escape the effect of this bad temper. One day, in particular, when he happened to look over Robert's shoulder, to see how he was getting on, Robert said, very hastily, "I wish you would mind your own business, James ; I cannot bear to be looked over in this way, and you know that I cannot. You do it to tease me, and keep me from getting the prize."

"You should not say so," James answered. "I am sure I should as well like you to have the prize as to gain it myself ; and only that it would not be right, I would make my piece so much worse than yours that there should be no fear of my getting it. But this

"Well?"

"And when I complained of the  
gave me a bad mark."

"Well, Mansfield," the master repeated,  
thing more?"

"No, sir; only I am sure Mr. Harpur  
spite to me; and—and—" continued  
ing afresh, "he snatched the book away  
—as if—like a dog, sir."

"Did Mr. Harpur take the book from  
mouth, Mansfield?"

"No, sir, I did not mean that; but  
it very rudely."

"Mansfield," said Mr. Deacon, gravely,  
you are in a very ill temper—an unuseful  
for you, sir; and you are not at present  
of thinking or speaking correctly. If your  
mood in the class, I do not wonder that  
placed a bad mark against your name;  
that you had not two. You may go now  
to you again presently."

Mansfield went very disconsolately to  
"presently" he was called up again.

"Now, Mansfield," said his tutor, "you  
little cooler, and can speak rationally.  
to re-state your grievance."

The boy did so.

"And what do you wish me to do?"

"If you would be so kind, sir, as to  
copies, and see if I deserved to be put  
class."

"Most assuredly I shall not do this,"  
Mr. Deacon. "You ask me to insult a gentleman."

but yet the writers lingered over  
 ever from top to bottom, and  
 one more touch, or rubbing out  
 still remained. Even the two  
 hope of gaining the prize, were  
 persevered and succeeded so well.  
 their pieces would please their  
 and; and they hoped that if  
 be given "next half," they might  
 of success by having taken pains  
 and Robert, too, seemed in good  
 as ever with each other: and  
 thought that his friend was sure  
 writing-desk, there was not a word of  
 them.

upper bell rang, and the boys put  
 each into his own desk, and  
 writing-room; and in another hour all  
 I fancy all were not asleep, for  
 go to sleep very early on the eve of a

for Mr. Deacon to distribute his  
 room was filled with eager expect-  
 and the master's desk was covered  
 books, among which might also be  
 writing-desk. Then Mr. Deacon  
 school, and all was hushed into

of the prizes had been given, Mr.  
 for the writing pieces, that he might  
 of the four boys was to receive the  
 Three boys directly rose from their  
 ing the pieces from their desks, placed



would be deceiving Mr. Deacon, and my father too. I must do my piece as well as I can ; but, if yours is done better, I am sure I shall not be sorry. And you should not say that I knew you did not like to be looked over, for, at first, you used to ask me every day to look at your piece. And indeed," continued James, "it is a good thing for you that I have looked just at this moment ; for see ——" and he pointed to a line of pencil printing which Robert was just preparing to ink.

"And what is the matter there?" asked Robert, still angrily.

"Why, do you not see there is a whole word left out? It is only a short word ; but your piece would have been spoiled without it."

Robert looked more closely, and saw that it was just as his friend said. But instead of feeling grateful to him for his caution, he was angry that the blunder had been made, and almost vexed with James for having found it out. However, he tried to say "Thank you ;" and he was wise enough to correct the mistake ; but his good temper was gone. As for James, he went back to his own desk, very sorry that his friend had spoken unkindly to him, and thought unkindly of him : and almost wishing that the writing prize had never been set before them.

The last day of school had now come. The next morning was to be the breaking up, and in the afternoon the prizes were to be given by Mr. Deacon : and then, on the following day, the happy schoolboys would be dispersed to their several homes for a whole month. Oh, what schoolboy does not know the pleasures of thinking about a long Midsummer holiday ?

Well, on this last day of school, the writing pieces

were almost finished ; but yet the writers lingered over them, looking them over from top to bottom, and giving, here and there, one more touch, or rubbing out the pencil marks which still remained. Even the two boys who had not much hope of gaining the prize, were pleased that they had persevered and succeeded so well. They thought that their pieces would please their master and their friends ; and they hoped that if another prize should be given "next half," they might have a greater chance of success by having taken pains this time. James and Robert, too, seemed in good spirits, and as friendly as ever with each other : and though each of them thought that his friend was sure of the pretty writing-desk, there was not a word of envy passed between them.

At length the supper bell rang, and the boys put their finished pieces each into his own desk, and hastened to the dining-room ; and in another hour all were in bed ; though I fancy all were not asleep, for schoolboys do not go to sleep very early on the eve of a breaking up.

The time came for Mr. Deacon to distribute his prizes. The schoolroom was filled with eager expecting schoolboys ; and the master's desk was covered with nicely-bound books, among which might also be seen the pretty writing-desk. Then Mr. Deacon entered the school, and all was hushed into silence.

After some of the prizes had been given, Mr. Deacon asked for the writing pieces, that he might decide which of the four boys was to receive the writing-desk. Three boys directly rose from their seats, and, taking the pieces from their desks, placed

them in the master's hands. "Here are but three," he said; "where is the other?"

No one answered; and when he looked to see whose was the missing one, he found that it was James's.

Then he glanced round the room, and saw that James was not among the boys, and no one could tell where he was.

"It is strange that he should be absent now," said the master; "but we cannot go on without him. Will one of you go and find him?"

Then one of the boys ran out of the room to find their schoolfellow, and soon afterwards returned with him. But poor James came in rather unwillingly, and it was plain that he had been crying.

"Why, James," inquired Mr. Deacon, speaking very kindly, "what is the matter with you? why were you not here? and where is your piece?"

"I have had an accident with my piece, sir," James replied; "and I did not like to show it."

"An accident! I am sorry for that. What sort of an accident? Let me see it."

Then James took the paper from his desk, and showed it to his master. There was a large blot upon it, as though a pen full of ink had been thrown upon it, and left to remain until it was dry.

"How did this happen?" asked Mr. Deacon: and this time he did not speak quite so kindly as before; for he did not like that his scholars should be careless with ink. If he saw a blot in a copy-book, it was sure to vex him.

James said that he could not tell how it happened.

He thought that he put the piece into his desk safely. He had laid it flat on the top of his books, because the last line was not quite dry when the supper bell rang, and he remembered putting his pens into the desk afterwards. He thought he had wiped them quite clean; but in the morning he found one of them had not been wiped, and lay on his piece so as to ink it and spoil it.

"A sad accident, indeed!" said Mr. Deacon. "You locked your desk, I suppose?"

It was one of the rules of the school, that every boy should keep his desk locked; and James answered that he had safely locked his.

"And do you suppose that anybody else could have blotted your paper?"

No: James could not think that any one else had done it. He felt sure that the accident must have happened through his own carelessness.

Then Mr. Deacon asked all the boys in the school if they knew anything of the matter; but they said that they did not.

"Well," said the kind master, "I am sorry for your misfortune, James. If it had not been for this blot, you would have had the prize, for yours is the best written piece; but I cannot give a prize for spoiled work, and I hope this disappointment will be a lesson to you in future, and teach you to be more careful. Perhaps, if you take pains, the next writing prize may be yours; but this must be given to your friend Robert: his piece is the best of the three."

So Robert received the writing-desk; and that same evening it was taken to an engraver's, that his name might be put on the brass plate that we spoke of.

James was glad that Robert had got the prize, and soon wiped away his tears. He would have been glad to have been able to take home to his parents a good writing piece, to show how much he had improved in half a year; and he was vexed to think he could have been so careless as to spoil it, after taking such pains. But he consoled himself with thinking that his copy-books would still show some very good writing, and also with hoping that the next writing prize might still be his.

The next day the boys all left school for the holidays—some in a coach one way, some in a post-chaise another way. As to James and Robert, their parents, who lived very near together in the country, sent a carriage on purpose to fetch them.

A great part of the holidays was over, when one day Robert's mother said to her husband, "I cannot think what is the matter with our boy. He does not seem to be happy. He mopes about in the garden, and will not play with his little sister. He does not seem to relish his food; and he does not sleep comfortably, for, when I go into his room at night, he is often tossing about in his sleep, and talking, and one night I found him awake and crying; but he would not tell me what was the matter with him. I think he cannot be well."

"And I," Robert's father replied, "have noticed that our son behaves in a very strange way. When I took him with me to our neighbour, Mr. L——, yesterday, he seemed not at all willing to go, and all along the road I could not get him to talk with me: he only said 'Yes' and 'No' to every question I asked him. And when we got to Mr. L——'s house, he would hardly

speak to his friend James, though James seemed as glad as ever to see him. I thought the boys must have had a quarrel at school; but Robert tells me they have not, and are as great friends as ever."

"Perhaps he does not like the thought of going back to school again so soon," said Robert's mother.

"I hope he is not so silly as to let that trouble him so much. But suppose we were to invite his friend James to come and spend a day with him soon; that may put him into better spirits."

So an invitation was sent to James, and he sent back a note to say that he should be very glad to come on the day that was fixed.

Robert was with his father and mother when the note arrived, and they told him what was in it; but he did not seem pleased, and he made no remark about it, such as, "I am very glad James is coming," or, "Oh, we shall have a happy day together!"

"What can be the matter with you, Robert?" his father said. "Will nothing please you?"

Robert made no answer, but he looked ready to cry.

His father thought it best to take no notice of this; so he said, "Your young friend writes very nicely, Robert: I think this note is written better than you would have written it. How is it he did not obtain the writing prize instead of you?"

"He would have had it, father; Mr. Deacon said so; only—only he had an accident with his piece. He—that is, it got blotted, and so was spoiled." And Robert did not stay to be asked any more questions, but hastened out of the room.

"This is very strange," his father said; "I wish I could find out what is the matter with the boy."

James paid his friend Robert the promised visit, and they were kindly allowed to amuse themselves in their own way. But still Robert's parents were anxious about him, and they took more notice than they would at other times have done, of the manner in which the two boys behaved. They noticed that James was full of glee and fun, was pleased with everything that was done for him, and seemed to show as much fondness as ever for his young friend, of whom he had not seen much through the holidays. But not so with Robert. At first he appeared shy; then, for a little while, he was in high spirits, and romped almost to rudeness. Then he complained of being tired, and went away into a corner of the garden by himself, leaving James to amuse himself with his little sister. And when the evening came, and James was getting ready to return home, and invited his friend to spend a day with him, Robert replied that he should rather be at home. And after James was gone, Robert seemed glad that he was gone, and asked his mother to let him go to bed.

That night Robert was very uneasy in his sleep. When his kind and careful mother went into his room before she herself retired to her own, she found him moving to and fro in his bed, and his forehead was quite wet with perspiration. He was asleep, but he was talking in his sleep, and his mother heard some things that he said. She did not hear much, but what she did hear made her very unhappy; it let her partly into the secret of her son's trouble. She did not wake him then, but she told her husband what she had heard, and what she feared; and they both prayed very earnestly to God that night, to pardon their son if he

had indeed done what they feared, and to give them grace to do what was right towards him.

In the morning, after breakfast, Robert's parents told him to remain in the room after the tea things were removed, for they wished to talk with him. So he stayed.

"Robert," said his father, "you were very uncomfortable in your sleep, last night. You talked aloud, and your mother heard some things that you said. Do you know what they were?"

Robert looked very red, and the tears came into his eyes; but he said, "No, papa; I do not know, I am sure."

"Well, I do not suppose you do, for persons who talk in their sleep do not generally know what they talk about. But I will tell you what you said, and then, perhaps, you will tell me the meaning of it. For one thing, you repeated the text of Scripture which is on your writing piece."

When Robert heard this, the colour left his cheeks, and he became very pale.

"After that," said his father, "you muttered something about the writing-desk, and said you wished there had not been any prize at all. And then you cried out, 'I did blot your piece, James, I did blot your piece!' Now, my dear Robert, will you tell me truly what all this means?"

Then Robert burst into tears, and could not speak for a long time for sobbing. At length, he said, "Oh, papa, I have been very wicked, and it is this that has made me so unhappy all through the holidays."

He then told his parents, without trying to hide anything, that when he had been working hard to gain



the writing prize, and found, after all, that his friend James had succeeded better than himself, he felt so envious and jealous, that he was tempted to spoil James's piece. So, on the breaking-up eve, after supper, he slipped out of the dining-room, and into the schoolroom, opened his friend's desk with his own key, which fitted it, and threw the pen full of ink upon the piece, just as it was found the next day.

"But indeed," he said, "I have been very, very unhappy, ever since I did it; and I cannot bear to look at the writing-desk, nor to see James. Oh, what shall I do?"

We may be sure that Robert's parents were very much grieved to find that their dear boy had acted so badly. They were godly, pious people; they had brought up their children to be true and honest in all their actions; and this was the first time that one of them had departed so greatly from the way in which all children ought to go. They could not, at first, decide what to do. They therefore told Robert to go into his own room for the present, and to try to confess his sin before God, as he had confessed it to them, while they consulted together about how they ought to act.

The first thing they did was to pray, as they had prayed the night before, that God would forgive their guilty son; and help them to do what was right. There is no reason to doubt that their prayer was answered; for God says to all His people, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. l. 15). And was not this a day of trouble to Robert's parents? Indeed it was. Oh, it is the greatest trouble that can befall a Christian

father and mother, when their children become wicked. I once heard a good man say to his wicked boy, "I lost nearly a thousand pounds last year, in my business : but that gives me no concern, compared with your bad conduct. I would willingly lose all I have, if God would but be pleased to change your heart." Dear young reader, may you never, never thus grieve the heart of a good father and mother.

On the afternoon of that sad day, Robert's father, and Robert himself, took a walk to the next village, where James and his parents lived. It may easily be supposed that Robert was not in very high spirits ; but yet, I think, he was happier than he had been through the whole of the holidays. He had confessed his fault ; and he was now going to make amends for it, as far as he could ; and these are the first steps to true peace of mind. The Bible says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy " (Prov. xxviii. 13). Robert had found the first part of this saying to be true, and he began to prove the second part of it to be true also. He had confessed his sin to his parents, and they had been kind towards him. They did not upbraid him or use violent language ; nor had they punished him at all,—that is, in the way that some boys would have understood the word punishment. He had not been flogged, nor made to go without his food, nor locked up in a dark room by himself. I do not think that these methods of punishment would have done Robert any good, considering the state of mind he was in. But his parents talked seriously to him of the guilt and danger of sin against God, and of the injury he had done to

his friend and schoolfellow ; and they knelt down with him, and prayed again to their merciful Father, who is in heaven, to forgive their son, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for sinners.

Robert had also confessed his sin to God in secret, and asked for pardon ; and this made him feel composed in his mind.

But his father had said to him, " You have not done all that you should do. You have confessed your sin to your parents, and to your heavenly Father ; but you must also confess it to your friend whom you have injured, and to your master and schoolfellows whom you have deceived ; and you must also try to make amends, in some way, for what you have done." It was on this errand that Robert and his father were bound when they went to see James.

And when the whole story was told to James by Robert's father ; and when Robert held out his hand to James, and asked his forgiveness for the injury he had done, did the little boy turn away in anger, and refuse to be reconciled to his friend ? Oh no, he took Robert's hand, and shook it heartily, and said, " Never mind, Robert, never mind. Do not say another word about it. I do not think you could mean in your heart to injure me. I was glad that you got the prize, and I should like that you should keep it. I dare say I shall get the next ; and if I do not, I shall not mind."

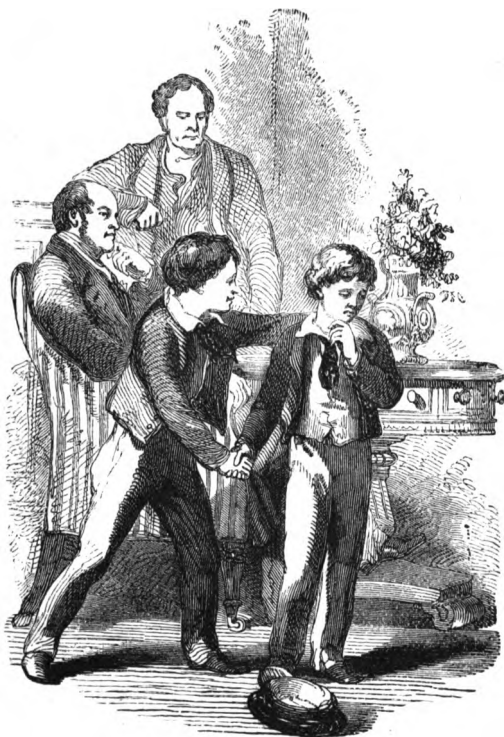
" And you will forgive me, then ?" Robert said, in a low voice.

" To be sure I will !" James answered ; " and I hope we shall be as good friends as ever."

And thus the two young friends were reconciled.

But Robert's father felt that justice ought to be done

to James, as well as his forgiveness obtained ; and so, though it was very painful to him to speak of his son's fault, he told the whole history of the blotted piece to James's parents. They were also very kind, and



THE RECONCILIATION.

willingly forgave Robert, and told him, that though it was very wicked to do as he had done, yet, that his having felt sorry for his sin, and his freely confessing

it, gave them great hopes that he would still grow up to be a good and honest man.

I shall not say what amends Robert made to his friend, at this time, for the injury he had committed. But he did make full amends for it as far as his own little stores would go; and his parents kindly assisted him. For a long time, James would not receive the present which Robert had brought with him; but at last he was persuaded to it by being told that Robert would be grieved, if he continued to refuse.

But there was another trial for Robert. It was necessary that he should take back with him to school the prize which he had gained by deceit; and that his master and all his schoolfellows should hear his confession. Robert's father grieved for him, and would gladly have spared him this trial if he could; but he felt that it was needful.

We will, however, pass over this part of the story, and only say, that Mr. Deacon received Robert's confession with kindness; and though it was proper that the schoolboys should know how they had been deceived, the good master told them that the sin had been fully confessed, and that it was his earnest wish that poor Robert should never, in any way, be reminded of what he had done. As to the little writing-desk, the brass plate which had Robert's name upon it was removed from the top, and Mr. Deacon would have had another put on, bearing James's name instead. But James begged his master not to give it to him; and Mr. Deacon thought it best to comply with this wish. So the desk was put quite out of sight, and was never more seen or heard of by any of the scholars.

Whether another writing prize was given at the next breaking up, or who obtained it, I cannot say. It is of more importance to know that Robert was deeply humbled, and was never afterwards known to be deceitful; that he regained the entire confidence of his master and his friends, and grew up to be a good man. But he never forgot his sin, and he never ceased to be sorry for it.





## X.

### THE CHALLENGE.

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"**M**Y son," said Alfred's father, as he was accompanying his son to school for the first time, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. I have been to school before you, and I know that many temptations will beset you, of which you have hitherto had little experience. This has led me to hesitate long before I could bring my mind to trusting you so far away, and for so long a time, from your home. Nor should I venture to do so now, but for my confidence in the gentleman who will take charge of you. But, after all, much will depend on yourself. Your conscience will be your monitor, if you will but regard it; and the Word of God will be your sure guide, if you will but consult it. 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.'"

"I will tell you," he continued, "a few of the trials and temptations I had to endure when I was a school-boy. Perhaps my experience may be useful to you.

"I had been taught from a child, as you have been,

to reverence the Bible, to read it daily, and to kneel, morning and evening, by my bedside, to pray; and I never once thought of forsaking at school the good practices which I had followed at home. But I found it a hard matter to keep them up. I was laughed at by my bed-room companions, and was soon known through the school as 'the little Methodist.' Mischievous tricks were played upon me; and I was so often interrupted that I thought I *must* give up praying to God, and reading His Word. But, happily, I remembered these words, 'My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother; bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee;' and I was thus encouraged to persevere. It was not long before I was left alone; some of my school-fellows took courage to follow my example, and those who did not, respected the practice which they would not imitate.

"Another of my temptations was to join in forbidden sports, or mischievous tricks. I was frequently, at first, invited to do so; but when these invitations were found to be unavailing, I was no longer troubled with them; and all the harm that came to me from my refusals was a nick-name or two, which, happily, did not disturb my peace.

"But there was one trial to which I was exposed, to which I too much yielded. By copying the example of other boys, I became less guarded against the employment of foolish words and phrases; and occasionally found myself using even very improper



language. I did not duly reflect upon that Scripture, 'That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' Many times, when I first began to acquire this habit, I checked myself, and was very unhappy to think how nearly I had offended; but still the habit gained upon me, and I no longer felt so troubled at the recollection of what I had said. It was many years after I left school that I was quite enabled to leave off the use of words that, at best, were unmeaning; and too many of which were sinful.

"I do not think," continued Alfred's father, "that you will have so much in the way of bad example and ridicule to tempt and try you as I had; but I believe that boys have still wicked natures and inclinations, just as they ever had—you, Alfred, as well as others; and that no care, nor the best instruction, can prevent much evil where many meet together. My earnest and last advice to you, therefore, is, to seek the help of your heavenly Father, who is always near you; to read His Word, though you may be taunted for it; to do what you know to be right, and avoid what your heart tells you is wrong, just as though your parents were present; to form no friendships with boys who make light of serious things; and especially to watch over your thoughts and words with scrupulous care. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'"

You need not think that Alfred was tired with hearing his father's good counsel ; for indeed he was not. He knew that it was intended for his benefit ; and he was thankful to his father for putting him once more in mind of what had often been told him. He resolved to treasure his father's words in his heart, and to obey them too. And it is almost certain that he then secretly prayed to God that he might have strength given him to walk in the ways of true piety and peace.

Do you ask why this is so very likely ? It is because Alfred really loved to pray at all times : and this was a very fit time for secret prayer. And we shall see, also, that he was preserved from the very sin against which his father cautioned him, although his firmness exposed him to scorn ; and surely he would on some occasions, at least, have given way if he had not sought and obtained help from God for the time of need.

Alfred soon became happy at school ; the more so in finding that he could read his Bible, and kneel by his bedside, without any interruption from his schoolfellows. Some of them made a practice of doing it too ; and though it is to be feared, from the hurried manner in which they went through this duty, and the foolish talking which immediately followed, that they thought but little of prayer, except as a form ; yet, Alfred—with whom it was not a mere form—could enjoy his own thoughts, and resign himself calmly to sleep at night, or rise to the fresh duties of the day, with the happy consciousness that he had committed himself to the keeping of the great God his Saviour.

There was one boy in the school with whom Alfred soon formed a sort of boyish friendship. His name was Herbert. There were many things in the circumstances of these two boys that were alike. Both of them were sons of pious parents ; they had been brought up to the same kind of habits at their homes ; they had learned the same hymns in their childhood ; they were both fond of singing, and each was pleased to find that the other could sing the same tunes to the same hymns ; the books they had brought with them to school were just such as each knew his own parent would approve ; and, in short, they were well pleased with each other. They also slept in the same room, and when they sometimes lay awake for a short time, they talked together about their homes, and the ways of home, or sometimes about the different histories they had read in the Bible.

And yet, for all these points of resemblance, there was one particular in which they very much differed. Herbert was irresolute. He, like Alfred, had formed many good plans as to what he would do, and what he would not do, when he was at school ; but these plans were not laid in dependence on any strength but his own : no wonder, therefore, that he was often led astray. Besides this, Herbert was fond of being noticed and admired by his companions, so that he was often induced to go further in acts of daring adventure than he knew to be quite right. Just in proportion, too, to his love of admiration, was his sensitiveness when any slight was shown him. A smile of derision, or a word of reproach, or even the fancy that he was thought of little account, often made him more unhappy than when he had really done wrong.

Among the schoolfellows of Herbert and Alfred were two or three boys who were not unfrequently guilty of using profane language, and of taking the name of God in vain. This awful practice they carefully concealed from their master : but when they were by themselves they gave way to it, and appeared to take delight in it. They foolishly thought that it was *manly* to cast off the fear of God, and defy Him by their guilty language. They rolled their iniquity, as a sweet morsel, under their tongues. Unhappily, they found others of their companions who began to imitate them at first, and then to compete with them, and even to excel them, in this particular sin. It may seem strange, but it is not the less true, that, in the course of a few weeks, the language of the playground (when no master or usher was near) became fearfully wicked. The dreadful practice spread like wildfire. Boys who but a short month before would have feared an oath, became vile blasphemers. And yet so privately did the guilty habit gain ground, and so careful were the boys not to be overheard by their master, that it was long before the painful truth came to his knowledge. When it did, he lost no time, and spared no trouble, to root out the mischief, and to awaken the consciences of his pupils to the enormity of their sin.

Herbert, no less than Alfred, had been brought up to reverence holy names and holy things; and he was shocked, very much shocked, when he first heard the utterance of an oath by a playfellow. It would have been well for him if he had copied Alfred's example, and at once separated himself from all who so wilfully broke the law of their God. But this he did not do. He thought it enough to set a guard upon his

own lips—a guard, alas ! too soon broken through. So true is it that—

“Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen ;  
But, seen too oft, familiar grows her face :  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

One day a few of the older boys of the school were sitting upon the playground bench, and among them was Herbert. What they were talking about is of little consequence ; but, whatever it might be, their conversation was unhappily polluted by profaneness. It happened that Alfred passed by, and heard something that was said. He started, and looked up. Surely he must have been deceived. Alas ! no. It was Herbert—his friend Herbert—whose voice he heard taking the name of God in vain. Surprised and grieved, he went up to his friend, and began to remonstrate with him ; but he was met with a shout of derision.

“Herbert is a good fellow,” said one of the tempters ; “he is none of your cowards and sneaks.”

“Nor am I a coward or a sneak,” replied Alfred ; “but I must say that I should be very sorry——”

“There, I said so,” said the other, interrupting him ; “I knew you would sneak.”

“I do not know what you mean,” was the reply.

The boy-bravo uttered a very profane expression. “There, match that if you can ; and then we shall know whether you are a coward.”

“I *am* a coward,” said Alfred, meekly and sadly ; “if that is the test, I am indeed a coward. I should be afraid to say what you have said ;” and he walked away, sorrowing that he should have witnessed such hardness of heart in his schoolfellows, and especially grieving for

his friend Herbert. Again a shout of mockery was raised against him, but it did not move him; and if afterwards he was seen with red and swollen eyes, he had not been crying about the scorn he had incurred,



"I AM A COWARD, IF THAT IS THE TEST!"

but for the sins of his companions. He knew the meaning of these words, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law" (Ps. cxix. 136).

Herbert was half inclined to retreat with Alfred. He knew that he ought to do so; but he hesitated; he was ashamed; he dreaded the derision of fools; he was afraid of being called a coward. That moment's hesitation riveted the chains of sin fast upon him. His hesitation was perceived by the profane boy who headed the set. "What, are you turning tail, too?" he asked, derisively. "You are not afraid, are you?"

"No, n—o," Herbert answered.

"Then"—but why should we write more? Herbert dreaded the scoffs of fellow-sinners more than the anger of God. From thenceforth he avoided the society of his friend Alfred, and was reckoned a hearty good fellow by the *brave hearts* in the school that could set their Maker at defiance. He had taken his first step in deliberate sin to prove that he was no coward; but it was not his last. In the next chapter we shall meet with him again.





## XI.

### HERBERT; OR, THE BOY WHO DID NOT LIKE TO BE SINGULAR.



**H**ERBERT left school with a blemished character, or rather, with a *mottled* character. There were many things in which he had given satisfaction to his best friends, and there was much also that had endeared him to his schoolfellows; but, on the other hand, he had in many respects disappointed the hopes which had been formed of him. The good impressions of his childhood had become faint, and his more amiable qualities had been obscured. One foolish, criminal weakness was at the root of the mischief—he could not bear to be singular; he had not the true courage to say “No,” to any project or action which his conscience disapproved; he chose rather to “follow a multitude to do evil,” than to walk alone in the plain and narrow path of rectitude.

Herbert was placed in the counting-house of a London merchant, in which were several clerks older than himself, though all were young men.

“Will you go with us to-night?” asked one of these



of Herbert, a few weeks after he had joined their society. "A capital new piece is coming out at Drury Lane."

"No, I think not," replied Herbert.

"Why, do you *never* mean to go to the theatre?"

"I do not know; perhaps I may; but I had rather not go to-night."

"Ah, I see how it is," said his fellow-clerk, with a smile; "you are one of Old Thompson's crew. I should not wonder if you were going off to some sermonising. Mind you bring home the text," he continued, with a smile of disdain.

Old Thompson, as he was sneeringly called, was one of the youngest of the clerks; but, like Herbert's old schoolfellow, Alfred, he had stood firm against the temptations with which he was surrounded.

"His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;  
Nor number nor example with him wrought,  
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,  
Though single"—

Ah, but that was the objection, the stumbling-block, to Herbert—*single*. He would have been very well content to take Old Thompson as his pattern, if his other companions had done so too: but to be linked in friendship with a young man who was perpetually being quizzed for his religion; to be pinned to his coat-sleeve, as their fellows would have said; perhaps to be called *Old Herbert*—the idea was too monstrous. The sneering smile conquered him. He hastened to disclaim the dreadful notion that he was engaged to hear a sermon, or to any of Old Thompson's whimsical resorts; and after a faint resistance, he yielded his early prejudices, and disobeyed his father's affectionate injunc-

tions. He went that night *only for once*, as he protested in secret to Old Thompson. But no one should say, or think, "I will do what my conscience tells me I ought not to do, only once; I will not repel this temptation with all my strength; but I will exert all my powers against it next time." In spite of his misgivings, Herbert was fascinated with the amusement; no arguments nor sneers were needed to prompt him to a second visit; and before long he became the inviter, rather than the invited.

*And what harm was there in it?* Much, in many ways. By giving way to the allurements of the theatre, the weak-minded young man soon lost all relish for the business in which he was engaged. Day-books and ledgers were dull things, and to be writing all day long was tiresome work; and the consequence was that Herbert became negligent of his duty, and made so many blunders in his books, as to call forth the frequent reprimands of his employer.

Then these visits to the theatre broke into his proper hours of rest, and consumed a large part of the money that he received. Sleepless nights after the dissipation of the evening, gave Herbert many a day's headache; and an exhausted purse gave him many an hour's heartache, which no remembrance of past pleasures, nor anticipation of future ones, could send away.

Conscience could not always be lulled to sleep in Herbert's breast. Although he tried to persuade himself that he was pursuing a very innocent amusement, he knew better than this. He could not but feel that very unholy passions were excited within him by what he heard and witnessed; that his remaining reverence

for the Bible and the Sabbath was very fast diminishing; and that, in addition to this, he had made light of the injunctions of a father who loved him dearly, and sought only his advantage in the restrictions he had laid down. It was under the influence of depressing thoughts such as these, that Herbert, more than once, said to himself, "I will never go to the theatre again." But then, if he were to refuse to go, he should be *laughed at*! This was too dreadful to be borne. To be called or thought a coward—it was not to be endured; so he acted the coward in reality.

But it was not in one particular alone that Herbert gave up his better judgment to the guidance and control of others, lest he should be thought a coward.

"Nonsense!" shouted a gay companion, in his ears, one Sunday morning; "you are not going to mope away your time in psalm-singing to-day? Leave that to Old Thompson, my hearty, or go to church when the sun does not shine. See what a glorious day it is for a good stroll out of this smoky hole. Come, what do you say? Where shall we go?"

"I—I really cannot go with you to-day. I have a particular engagement," stammered Herbert.

"Ah, I thought Old Thompson had been at you; but you must give him the go-bye for once."

"I cannot, indeed," replied Herbert in a rueful tone.

"But you *must*, I tell you;"—and so he did; for it was more terrible by half to be called "Old Thompson's shadow," than to break an engagement, and the Sabbath into the bargain. He was brave enough to do the latter, but he had not the courage to bear the former. So the day—the first of a long series of mis-spent Sabbaths—was passed in pleasure-taking.

Incited by one evil companion especially, and by others in a less degree, Herbert soon learned to mock at sin, and to laugh at his former scruples as unmanly and absurd. Having allowed himself to be tempted to *walk* in the counsel of the ungodly, and to *stand* in the way of sinners, he at length *sat* in the seat of the scornful (Ps. i. 1.) Three years of pleasure-seeking and Sabbath-breaking had hardened his heart against the reproaches of conscience, and made him indifferent to all beside, so that he stood well in the opinion of his unworthy false friends. And yet there were times when Herbert was not at ease with himself, when he would have given much to recall the past, when he had some faint wishes, at least, that he had given heed to the admonition, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." But the chains of habit were around him, and the allurements of evil were becoming stronger and stronger.

"Drink, drink, my boy, and drown your care!" Herbert had already drank enough to bewilder his brain; but not half enough to drown his care. He had that on his mind at this particular time which defied the power of wine and song. His irregularities had, that day, drawn upon him the severest rebukes of his employer; and the threat of dismissal was hanging over his head. He had received a letter from home, in which his father affectionately remonstrated with him respecting some improprieties which had reached his ears; and urging him, by all the hopes which had once been formed of him, to forsake the paths of false pleasure, and return to the God of his mercies.

"I *will* return," was Herbert's first resolution, on

reading that letter. "I will spend this evening alone, and in prayer."

The evening came, and found him in a tavern, with two of his dissolute companions. It would be cowardly—so reasoned the evil principle in his heart—to quail beneath the frowns of a precise old fellow like his employer, or to be melted into tenderness by a few soft words in a letter: besides, if he were to show signs of such weakness, should he not be laughed at? He would bear anything rather than that.

But Herbert had another cause for anxiety, which will presently appear.

"Drink, and drown your care," repeated one of his friends, seeing that he passed the bottle without filling his glass.

"I believe I have had enough," replied poor Herbert.

"Not a bit of it; why, you look like a rated hound. What can be the matter with you?"

Herbert stammered out part of his trouble.

"Is that all?" said his tempter. "Then let us drink the old fellow's health in a bumper. Off with it, man. And suppose you do lose your situation; there are as good to be got, and better too, for asking. Look at me, now; why, when he slipped me off so unhandsomely, all I had to do was to step into the next street: better salary, more liberty, more life, and all that. Send you away! much good may it do him. I half wish he would, for your sake. Come, another glass, my lad."

It was very true that Herbert's former fellow-clerk, having been dismissed from one counting-house for gross negligence, had speedily found another open for him. Herbert knew this before; and being now re-

minded of it, he began to think lightly of his own precarious standing with his employer. But Herbert did not know that his friend had already tired out his new employers; that he was on the brink of an exposure which must inevitably ruin his character; and that he was, at that very moment, seeking Herbert's co-operation in a scheme for his own escape, which, if it failed, would involve the hapless youth likewise in the same ruin.

"By the way, Herbert," he said; "suppose we change the subject. I owe you five pounds; do you want it just now?"

Indeed Herbert did want it; and one of the causes of his gloom was, that his last quarter's salary had almost entirely disappeared, and that demands from more than one of his creditors had that very day been pressed upon him—demands which he had no means of satisfying. He had dreaded to remind his *friend* of this long-standing debt, lest he should be called mercenary. He was overjoyed, therefore, when the subject was introduced by that friend himself.

"If you can let me have it," replied Herbert, with alacrity, "I shall be very glad of it; for, to tell the truth, I am bored to death with — and —; and I shall have nothing to receive for the next month."

"How very unfortunate!" was the rejoinder. "Now I have been hoping all along that you might have another five pounds to spare for a week or two, till my day comes round. And you really are worked out?"

"Not ten shillings left," sighed Herbert.

"That purse of yours that you pulled out just now seemed too heavy for ten shillings," remarked the

tempter, with a little degree of sharpness. "But perhaps you carry halfpence in your purse, to make believe with. A capital plan that," he continued, addressing their companion, who had hitherto been silent—"a good plan that, Ambrose."

But Herbert disclaimed such a practice. There was money in his purse, he said; but it was not his own. He had received it that afternoon from his employer, to pay a tradesman who lived near his lodgings. He ought to have called with it the same evening; but it would be too late now, and he must do it the first thing to-morrow.

His two companions winked significantly at each other; but said nothing. They presently called for more wine, and took care to ply the infatuated youth with fresh bumpers, until his cares and his reason were alike for a time drowned. It was the first time Herbert had been really intoxicated; but not the first time, by many, that he had looked "upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright" (Prov. xxiii. 31).

Of the rest of the proceedings of that evening Herbert had but a very imperfect and confused recollection, when, at an hour past midnight, he was led by his *friends* to his lodgings, and laid his throbbing head on his pillow. In the morning, with returning consciousness came that sinking of spirits which belongs pre-eminently to the drunkard, and that dread of consequences which no bravado can beat off from the conscience of the evil doer. He first, instinctively almost, felt in his pocket for his purse. It was there safe. He pulled it out, and counted its contents. Wonderful! So far from being di-

minated, it contained more by several pounds than on the preceding evening. Herbert sat down and pondered. He had an indistinct remembrance of reeling from the tavern, accompanied by his two boon companions; of passing along two or three well-known streets, and then being led unresistingly up a dark passage which he had never before explored. Then he recollected something of a large room, brilliantly lighted, and crowded with guests, who seemed inclined to dispute his entrance until he was introduced in form by one of his friends. The rattling of dice, the sharp exclamations of the players, the muttered oaths of the losers, with many other kindred circumstances, convinced Herbert that he had spent some time in a gaming house; that he had lent money—not his own—to his friends; that he had staked it on his own account, and, strange to say, had won! These conjectures were confirmed beyond question when, as he was proceeding to his employer's counting-house, he met one of his last night's companions, who congratulated him on their mutual good luck, and proposed an early repetition of the visit. Poor Herbert!

In a small village in the south of England, is a neat cottage, inhabited by an aged couple, who are said to have seen better days, and by a middle-aged man—their son. Deep lines of sorrow are marked on all their countenances; but on that of the son there are also strong indications of premature old age. Little communication passes between the villagers and these strangers; but there are sharp ears, nevertheless, which have heard, and busy tongues



which do not hesitate to whisper the following tale.

"The old folks," say they, "were well to do in the world once, far away from here; and their son was sent to London to be a merchant. But he went on very badly, and was turned out of one or two situations; and at last was caught robbing his master—such a drunken, extravagant, gambling, dishonest fellow he became. So he was tried, and transported across the seas for fourteen years, though his poor father begged hard for him to be forgiven; and would have parted with all he had, so that his son might not be exposed and punished. Then things went badly with the old man: he lost heart, and came almost to ruin, only that he had an annuity, or something of that sort, coming in, that could not be touched. So they sold off everything, and came to live here; and when their good-for-nothing son came home from transportation, they brought him down here too. And, oh, to see how kindly they treat him!"

This is the village story; and it is nearer the truth than many village stories are. That returned convict is Herbert—the boy who could not bear to be laughed at—who had not the courage to say NO.



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*Pardon & Sons, Printers, Paternoster Row, London.*



